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THE

CHRONICLES OF BUDGEPORE;

OR,

Sketches of Life in Upper India.

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BY

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THE CHRONICLES OF BUDGEPORE.

THE HISTORY OF THE BARRACKS.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DANGER OF INTERFERING WITH NATIVE CUSTOMS.

About a week after this, as Stuart was returning very early from a morning ride in the country, he had occasion to pass a small police chowkee or station. As he rode by, his attention was attracted by the sound of low, continuous moaning, varied by an occasional half-suppressed shriek or cry, uttered in a shrill voice, but apparently stopped either by the effort of a strong will or violence. As the gate was shut, and there was no one visible outside, Stuart, thinking that perhaps there might be some one very ill inside, and wanting assistance, dismounted, and tying his horse up to a neighbouring tree, went to the gate, and by a sharp and vigorous effort pushed it open and entered. He found

himself in a small, square courtyard, surrounded with low, mud-built walls, and a row of huts on the further side against the opposite wall. In one corner of the courtyard two wooden posts had been erected on the ground, with a cross-beam on the top, connecting them like a gallows. Upon this cross-beam was suspended the body of a man, hanging by his two thumbs, which were tied tightly by thin cords to the beam, in such a position that while his body, hanging with all its weight from the thumbs, was stretched to the utmost, the points of the toes were just the least bit above the ground. The man was stark naked, with the exception of a cloth round his loins. The expression of agony in his features was most painful to witness; and the low, moaning sound, which had attracted Stuart's attention proceeded from him. Unable to support in silence the intolerable torture occasioned by suspension, for a length of time, of the whole weight of the body hanging by the two thumbs (in reality a species of crucifixion), the poor wretch every now and then uttered a shriek, which was, however, speedily suppressed by a threatening gesture from one of two men who stood by him, and who, as Stuart afterwards learnt, had prevented their victim from allowing himself a louder vent to his feelings, by giving his body a push every time he commenced uttering the piercing cry. The swinging motion thus im-

parted to the man's frame aggravated his sufferings so intensely, that even in the extremity of his anguish he had presence of mind enough to suppress the shriek and confine his expression of suffering to a low moan. When Stuart entered and advanced towards the group, the two men who were standing by the instrument of torture glanced at one another, and then turned angrily upon the intruder. Stuart was not likely to be influenced much by any gesture of impatience on their part, and at once ordered them, with the voice of authority, to release the man, and demanded by whose orders they were committing this atrocious outrage, and who they were. Seeing them rather disinclined to acknowledge his right to order the man's release, he took his penknife from his pocket, and standing upon a low stool he found close by, he speedily cut the string that was fastened round the man's thumbs, and released him. Exhausted by the suffering he had endured, he was unable to stand, and fell senseless at the young officer's feet.

Again Stuart turned angrily upon the two men, and demanded who they were, and by whose authority they had been inflicting those tortures. By this time they had had leisure for reflection. Detected *flagrante delicto,* it was useless to take refuge in a denial. Their only course was to confess the truth. And so one of them, to whom

Stuart had principally addressed himself, as he appeared to be the senior of the two in age as well as rank, replied, that he was jemadar of the police, and that the prisoner was in custody on a charge of rape and murder, and he had been subjected to the usual process to induce him to confess, according to the custom of the law in like cases, and in this especial instance by the express order of Shekh Futtoo.

After obtaining this information from the jemadar of police, Stuart turned his attention to the prisoner, and calling for cold water, which the other policeman rather officiously brought, endeavoured to restore him to animation. After a time he succeeded so far that the man was just barely able to speak, and Stuart, leaning over him, asked him who he was, and what he had done. The man replied, his name was Beharee; that he had unfortunately incurred the enmity of Shekh Futtoo, because he had sent in a contract for the bricks, which contract had not been taken; but he had subsequently taken a subcontract from the man whose tender had been accepted. This person was a relative of Shekh Futtoo, and he had offended both him and his powerful relative by threatening, if he was not paid certain monies then due to him, to send an urzee or letter to the "sahib," informing him that he had been one of the original tenderers for the contract, but had found it remunerative

enough to take the sub-contract, under the man whose contract had been accepted; thus showing that, in taking this contract, Government were paying fifty per cent. more than they ought to have paid. Two days after this threat had been made, Beharee had been arrested by the police and taken before the magistrate on a charge of rape and murder. The magistrate had ordered him to be retained in custody of the police, pending further investigation; and the result Stuart had witnessed.

"This," thought Stuart, as he rode home after giving the poor wretch what encouragement he could, bidding him be of good cheer, and if any further violence were offered him, he, Stuart, would take signal vengeance on his persecutors, "this is the way which we English take to enlist the affections and sympathies of the people of India. Here is an accidental revelation made, one instance of the diabolical practices pursued over the whole country brought to light, by the exceptional circumstance of my happening to be riding this morning past the police station. How infamous is the system that allows of such practices as these! How tremendous the guilt incurred by those European officers who tacitly permit the enactment of such atrocities. At any rate there will be an exposure now. I will go to the magistrate directly I get home and tell him all. And, by Jove, if he does not get

the perpetrators of it properly punished, I'll report it to Government, and, better still, send it to the papers."

So ruminated Stuart on his way home. What came of the report and the exposure will appear in the sequel.

"I have had a very extraordinary communication from Stuart this morning," said Mr. Dakhil Duftar, to Mr. Wasilbakee, as he sat down in the room where the latter was enjoying his after-breakfast cheroot, on the same morning that the occurrence took place. "I have come over straight to tell you about it, as I don't see very clearly what to do. He says as he was riding home this morning, and passing by the Palampore station, he heard groans inside; he went in and found a man in the last extremity of torture tied up by the thumbs, he cut him down, and the man fainted immediately. There were two of the police there, a jemadar and a man whose name he does not know. The jemadar, whose name was Soorut Singh, told him that they had been torturing the man to confess to a charge of rape and murder. I remember the case. It came before me the other day, and was remanded for further inquiry. One of the most curious parts of the story, however, is that the jemadar told him he had received orders to inflict the torture from your serishtadar, Shekh Futtoo. The man himself said

that he had been charged with this crime immediately after threatening to divulge the fact that he had tendered for some contract to the Public Works Department, and that his tender had been refused, but he had taken the subcontract and was actually furnishing the articles supplied to Government at fifty per cent. less than the price paid by Government for them."

"What a rigmarole," was Mr. Wasilbakec's rejoinder. "However, it is a serious charge against my serishtadar. I think it will be only fair to hear what he has to say about it. You know there's a deal of bosh talked about this torture. What, after all, is it, tying a man up by the thumbs? I don't see anything so very shocking in it. That fellow Stuart is just the kind of chap to find a mare's nest; he is an enthusiastic young man, rather addicted to psalm singing, I believe. Such people, you know, sometimes, are subject to mental hallucinations. We'll see what the Shekh has to say about it. I'll bet any money it is some trumped up story. It is astonishing how many enemies that man has. Every good native always has. Did you ever observe it, whenever you get a really good man to serve you faithfully and honestly, you may be sure there will be intrigues and plots against him."

"What do you think I had better do about the man? Suppose he were to be tortured to

death, and the papers get hold of it, or Government."

"The papers be d——, and as for Government, why, all they will do will be to call for a report, and if you don't know how to write a report by this time, Dakhil Duftar, you ought to, that's all I know. Have a cheroot?"

"But if the poor devil has really been tortured in this way," said Dakhil Duftar, lighting his cheroot, "surely we ought to make an example of the police."

"Fiddlestick—tortured to death! A nice nest of hornets you will stir up if you punish the police for torture; why not an officer in the whole district will have a day's peace for the next five years. At least a thousand cases of 'tortured to death' will be reported at once, and will have to be investigated. No, no, Dakhil Duftar, take my adviee, don't stir muddy water. We are bid not to interfere with the established institutions of the country, and if torture is one of them, what is it to us, we didn't introduce it?"

"We sanction it, though."

"No we don't, we simply obey orders, and don't interfere with an established custom of the country."

"It seems to me deuced like sanctioning it, if we don't punish for it when it is brought to our notice."

"Here comes the Shekh, now let us hear what he says."

The serishtadar's portly figure had just made its appearance in the verandah as Mr. Wasilbakee pronounced these words. He usually called at the house on his way to office to have a little private conversation with his master and take orders, for Mr. Wasilbakee seldom went to his office, as he transacted most of his business at home.

Dakhil Duftar watched narrowly the serishtadar's countenance as Mr. Wasilbakee was recounting to him the story, and thought he detected a curious expression passing over his features. It was very slight and very momentary, for the Shekh was not in the habit of allowing men to read his thoughts in his countenance. Still there was a change in expression, a change which Dakhil Duftar felt sure would not have occurred if he had been listening to the details of a story with which he was really unconnected in any way. When Mr. Wasilbakee came to that part of it where the Shekh's name was introduced, he smiled slightly, but said nothing. When Mr. Wasilbakee had finished, he said,—

"Those who serve great men faithfully always have enemies and backbiters. Doubtless this is a shocking outrage, and, of course, the sahib speaks the truth. As we know sahibs are not

like the natives of this country in this particular. But still it is very strange that such a thing should happen in the Budgepore district where all the world knows the police are so honest and so well looked after by the collector sahib and your honour. Your servant does not think anything of his name being used; that is so often done that your honour will not require him to bring any proof that the whole thing is a fabrication as far as your servant is concerned. But if your honour would send for the man who has been tortured, and ask him about it, perhaps that would be the best way. We shall then hear all about the affair at once."

Both Wasilbakee and Dakhil Duftar were completely persuaded, by the Shekh's manner rather than his words, that he had been very badly used by having his name mixed up with the affair at all. The former, indeed, had adopted this conclusion from the first, being led thereto from sheer force of habit.

"You are right," replied Mr. Wasilbakee; "we'll send for the man, and have him here at once."

Saying this, the commissioner called out to a servant, with the view of giving the order to have the man brought.

"Pardon me," said the Shekh; "there is no need of haste in the matter. I will become answerable that no more injury is done to the

poor man. There is a case of the very utmost importance requiring your honour's immediate attention. I have the papers with me, here; and if your honour will attend to it at once, I will, with your honour's permission, go on to court and get over the current business there and return here in the afternoon, when the man can be brought up and examined."

"As you please," said the commissioner; "don't be later than three o'clock. I have an engagement at four. Meantime, what's this important case? I don't recollect it."

"Your honour has forgotten the application from the villages of Meeanpore and Akalabad for remission of revenue. The zemindars are very impatient, and they are a very discontented and disaffected set in those parts; and your servant heard yesterday that some agrarian disturbance was inevitable. The only thing to pacify them is to attend to this application for remission."

"Indeed; are they so rebellious as that? But don't let us have a disturbance—that would get to the ears of Government. I hate a disturbance, of all things; there is no end to the trouble, reports and despatches, and statements; and the troops have to be called out, and the crops get trampled down, and then there are compensation claims, and the very devil. Where are the papers?"

The Shekh went out to fetch the papers, which were in a large bundle his attendant carried. From the position the papers were in, and the time it occupied to rake up that particular bundle out of the mass, it certainly would not have occurred to a bystander that the serishtadar had anticipated the necessity of this case being called for so promptly.

The serishtadar waited till Mr. Dakhil Duftar had left the commissioner's house and repaired to his office, where he knew he would be closely occupied all day till five o'clock. Then, after having given the papers to the commissioner, he set out himself on the road towards his own office. Instead, however, of going there, he stopped at a turning in the road, despatched his attendants to the court, desiring them to say he would be there himself shortly, but had some private business to transact elsewhere. Having given these instructions he got his many-coloured steed into a brisk amble, and jogged away in the direction of the Palampore police station.

What took place there I cannot exactly tell. But I know that he had a few minutes' conversation with the police jemadar, after which he went away.

In the evening of that day Stuart received the following note from Dakhil Duftar :—

MY DEAR STUART,

You must have been strangely mistaken about the story you told me to-day. The man Beharee was sent for by the commissioner and examined by him, and he denied ever having been subjected to any torture at all, nor had he any marks of it upon his person. He said he had seen you. He is the same who was in custody upon a charge of murder, which turns out now to be unsubstantiated by any *primâ facie* case against him; and he is now at large.

Yours sincerely, DAKHIL DUFTAR.

Budgepore, May 25.

Before writing that note Dakhil Duftar had received the following from Mr. Wasilbakee:—

MY DEAR DUFTAR,

Wonders will never cease. I was right. Your friend Stuart must have been labouring under some strange hallucination this morning, or mental aberration. The man Beharee was brought to me this afternoon. I carefully examined him. He denies most positively ever having been subjected to any ill-usage; on the contrary, he says he has been particularly well treated ever since he has been in custody.

He has no marks on his person of any ill-treatment, nor do even his digital appendages show the faintest trace of having supported the whole weight of his body, as represented. If

you think you can suspend a man by his thumbs for twelve hours without the latter showing any signs of having been put to such abnormal uses, I recommend you to try the experiment upon yourself.

He states, however, that he did see your friend Stuart, who came into the police station this morning in a most excited state; that he spoke to him, but could not understand what he said, and thinks it very possible Stuart sahib, as he calls him, misunderstood him. I examined both the policemen separately, and they both gave the same account of Stuart's appearance: their statement does not vary in the slightest particular. The serishtadar and the police jemadar are both very hot upon prosecuting Stuart for defamation, but I advised them not. I certainly think, however, that a man subject to such fits of mental aberration is hardly fit to be at large, much less to be intrusted with such important duties as he now has in charge; and I shall send a private report of the circumstances to Government, with a view to his either being removed or closely watched. I have, however, heard some strange things about him, with reference to his accounts and money matters, which have set me thinking.

Yours sincerely,

JUMMA WASILBAKEE.

Budgepore, May 25.

On receipt of Dakhil Duftar's note, Stuart was fairly puzzled. He was the last man in India to justify the commissioner's opinion and suggestion of mental aberration. Cool, clear-headed, and practical in all the ordinary concerns of life, no man was less likely to have been deceived. What he had described he had seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears, and yet there was arrayed against him such a mass of evidence, that for a second or two he was almost startled into a disbelief of his own identity. A few moments' reflection, however, convinced him that the commissioner and the magistrate were dupes in the hands of their subordinates, no rare phenomenon, and he resolved at once to investigate the matter further. With this view he ordered his horse, and rode out to the village where he knew the man Beharee lived. He did not find him, but he learnt from the neighbours that he had been released and had been to his house, but had gone out again with some relatives, who had come to congratulate him on his escape. Leaving word with his next door neighbour that he wanted to speak to him, when he had leisure to come into Budgepore, he rode back, after vainly endeavouring to procure an interview with Mrs. Beharee, who, being a "purda nasheen," or a woman who will not show herself to strangers, refused to see him.

"Have you had any dispute with the Wasil-bakees or the Duftars?" asked his wife of Stuart, when she came in from her evening drive.

"No; why do you ask?"

"Because I saw them at the band, and Mrs. Dakhil Duftar and the commissioner, who is usually so polite and friendly, both seemed as if they wanted to cut me. I thought you must have had some quarrel with them."

"No, I have had no quarrel with them, but a very curious thing has happened to-day, which may possibly have made them feel ill-disposed towards me, but yet I can hardly think so, it must have been your fancy."

"No, I'm sure it was not fancy. I don't take such fancies into my head easily. But what is it that has happened?"

He then told her what he had been too much occupied during the day to tell her before, the strange story about the man Beharee.

Nothing more happened that day, but the following night, just as Stuart was preparing to go to bed, his servant came and told him that there was a villager outside, who had come in from the district, and wanted to speak to him.

He went out, and found a lad about fifteen or sixteen years of age, who told him that he was Beharee's son, and that his father had been taken very ill that evening with terrible pains

in the stomach. His wife and the neighbours were very much alarmed about him, and he had desired that the sahib might be sent for at once, as there was something he wanted to tell him before his death, which he said he felt sure was near at hand. Stuart immediately ordered his buggy, and taking the boy with him drove out to the village. It was past eleven when he reached the place, and leaving his buggy in the road, he walked across the fields to the village where Beharee's house was situated. On entering the house, or hut, as we should call it in England, he found Beharee stretched upon a rude bedstead, by the side of which his wife was seated on her haunches, with her head resting on her knees, swaying her body to-and-fro, and uttering a low moaning sound, indicative of the agony of despair. A few of the neighbours stood round the bed, where the almost lifeless form of Beharee lay, the dismal scene lighted up by a miserable oil lamp, that emitted as much smoke as light.

As he advanced to the bedside, the natives respectfully withdrew. He merely glanced at their faces, but among them was one that seemed familiar to him. At the moment, he did not call to mind where he had seen him before, but he recollected afterwards that the features he recognized were those of the second policeman, whom he had seen in the court-yard

of the police-station. He took the dying man's hand in his, and asked him how he felt. At the sound of his voice the man opened his eyes, and when he saw who it was, a gleam of recognition and an expression of relief passed over his pallid, agony-stricken features. He attempted to speak, but his voice was so weak; that his visitor had to put his ear close down to his lips before he could distinguish what he said. And what he did say was uttered in broken sentences, and at times almost inarticulate words.

The substance of his communication may be paraphrased into something like the following:—

"I sent and begged you to come and see me before I die, that my wife and children may have some one to take care of them. It was you, sahib, that delivered me from the tortures of hell! worse than hell! but it was only that I might die by poison; and when I am dead, the enmity of those who hate me, because I escaped their hands and got them into trouble, will fall on my helpless widow and orphan children."

Stuart then elicited from him by a number of questions, that he had been taken ill with vomiting and violent pains in the stomach that day, immediately after eating his dinner, at a sort of feast or convivial gathering, given in celebration of his escape, by his uncle. There

were no strangers, none but members of his own family present, except, and this only came out after rather a close examination of the dying man, one person, the policeman whose features Stuart had noticed but not recognized, and who had been especially invited, on account of his sympathy with Beharee.

"But," asked Stuart, noticing the swollen appearance of the man's thumbs, and the nails blackened with the blood that had been forced under them, and the marks where the cord had cut into the flesh, "how came you to tell the commissioner, sahib, that you had not been tortured or ill-treated at all?"

"I never told him so," was the substance of the man's reply.

Again Stuart asked him if he had not been to the commissioner's house the day before, and he declared most positively he had not; and "if I had," he added, "could not the commissioner sahib have seen this," intimating, by a slight motion of his thumbs, that it was to them he was referring.

It was impossible to continue the conversation further. The substance of what I have related, so far as communicated by the dying man, was elicited with much patient painstaking by his questioner, and the process occupied a considerable time, for the man's strength was failing fast, and latterly Stuart had had to make a long

pause before he could get any answer at all from him. He remained by the bed of death till all was over, and then, leaving the sorrowing widow and orphan child to utter their lamentations alone over the corpse of the husband and the father, he drove home in melancholy mood.

The next morning, early, he rode over to Dakhil Duftar's house, in order to find him before he went out for his usual morning ride, and told him what had passed. That gentleman admitted that the affair looked suspicious, but could not believe that so respectable a man as Shekh Futtoo could lend himself to so deep a plot as to take a substitute for Beharee before the commissioner, which Stuart declared he must have done. However, the result was, that Dakhil Duftar promised to see Mr. Wasilbakee about it that morning; and meantime the body of Beharee was brought into Budgepore, where a *post mortem* examination was made by the civil surgeon, who reported that the deceased died of inflammation in the bowels, brought on by natural causes, and that there was no appearance of any mineral poison having been used. Vegetable poisons the doctor declared himself unable to detect. He would have sent the viscera to the Chemical Examiner at Allahabad; but as the order from the head of the medical department directed that in such cases the substances requiring examination are to be put into

old tart fruit bottles, and as there were none at that time to be had at Budgepore, he did not consider himself justified in assuming the responsibility of sending them in any other way.* There were no external appearances of violence or injury that could have resulted in death. The only marks were marks upon both the thumbs, which might have been caused by cords being tied tightly round them, or what was more likely, by the deceased having bitten his thumbs very violently during the agonies he suffered from the disease of which he died; and this, the doctor added, he had learnt from careful inquiries, was the case.

The careful inquiries consisted in his asking the policeman who came in with the body, how the deceased got those marks on the thumbs; in reply to which the policeman told him, the deceased had bitten both his thumbs constantly ever since he had been taken ill.

Dakhil Duftar went up to the commissioner's after breakfast, and while he was there the medical report of the results of the *post mortem* examination came in. Mr. Wasilbakee listened to all Dakhil Duftar had to say, and then replied :—

* The chemical examiner having represented that a supply of glass jars or bottles was required for the purpose of sealing up and forwarding subjects for examination, in cases of suspected poisoning, the head of the medical department directed that in all such cases *old tart fruit bottles* were to be used.

"I don't see anything in it, Duftar. It is not at all likely Shekh Futtoo would lend himself to such a dangerous plot, and deceive me in a matter in which there must be at least fifty witnesses to the truth, any one of whom has him in his power. Besides, what object could be served? what has he to gain by it? Admitted that he is a knave, for the sake of argument, yet he is no fool; on the contrary, he has a deuced long head of his own. And do you mean to tell me he would ever do anything so foolhardy as to put his neck in a noose for nothing? No; it is a great deal more likely to be true, as the doctor says, that this man did bite his thumbs till they bled, in the agonies of his last sickness."

Dakhil Duftar did not look convinced. He did not know what to think. And the Commissioner, after a pause, went on:—

"However, it is a matter very easily settled. If there is truth in Stuart's story, the only way the affair could have been managed was, that they must have substituted some one else for Beharee, and brought another man here the day before yesterday instead of him. It is exceedingly improbable; but that all doubts may be cleared up, we'll just call three or four of these chuprassees that are here now, and see what they say. At any rate, they are not under the influence of Shekh Futtoo, and he is not present."

This conversation, together with the deter-

mination of Mr. Wasilbakee, had been listened to by the jemadar of that gentleman's chuprassees, who understood English, reader, pretty nearly as well as you do, but who assumed a blank, stolid look, of utter indifference, as long as the English language was being spoken when he was present. Quick as lightning he vanished from the doorway, where, ensconced behind the curtain, he had posted himself directly Mr. Duftar made his appearance, as it was likely that the collector sahib had something of importance to communicate to the Commissioner sahib by his coming at that rather unusual hour to his house. I need hardly tell you that every chuprassee and servant in the establishment of Mr. Wasilbakee was the creature of Shekh Futtoo, whom any of them would as soon have offended as he would have walked into a tiger's den. The consequence was, as you may readily guess, that when Mr. Wasilbakee called the chuprassees and asked them if they were quite sure that the man brought to his house two days before, was really Beharee, and not some one substituted for him, they were not *very* likely to deny his identity, seeing they all knew what had been going on just as well as you do after reading these chronicles.

So Dakhil Duftar went away quite satisfied that Stuart's suspicions were altogether un-

founded. As for Mr. Wasilbakee he had never been of any other opinion.

It was extraordinary how Stuart's popularity declined. By degrees the strangest rumours became circulated about him—no one could say definitely what there was against him, no one could tell whence the rumours came. The result was apparent enough in cold looks turned upon him and his wife, and bitter words behind their backs. Nobody knew exactly what to say or what to think, but no one in the whole place had the moral courage to associate with the Stuarts as formerly; they were regularly under a ban. The officials took their cue from Mr. Wasilbakee, who shook his head gravely whenever Stuart's name was mentioned, and used to "pity his poor wife." Mrs. Dakhil Duftar had no pity for Mrs. Stuart, she had always disliked her, she said, and thought there was something very odd about her, and that it was very strange she, a subaltern's wife, should be the best dressed lady in the station; her dresses and bonnets came out direct from Paris, and could not cost her less than two or three hundred pounds a year.

A bad calculation, that of Mrs. Dakhil Duftar, and showing how the head is likely to be influenced by the heart, for I knew the Stuarts intimately, and I know that all she

had to dress herself upon was fifty rupees a month.

The officers of the different regiments at Budgepore followed the general example. They ceased to ask Stuart to dine at their messes on guest nights, and treated him so coldly at the bath and the racket court, that at length he declared he could bear it no longer, and absented himself. His wife was in weak health and quite unable to get about, so that they did not feel the want of society so much as they might otherwise have done; and Stuart, who was conscious enough of the general feeling towards him, but totally unable to divine the cause, kept his troubles to himself, and would not let his wife be worried about them. He was a man of rather reserved character, fond of reading a great deal and thinking, and not at all disposed to court popularity. He was zealously devoted to his work, in which he laboured assiduously to do his duty. He put down the treatment he met with abroad to his own want of geniality of disposition, and the quiet, and, to a certain extent, unsociable character of the life which his wife's state of health rendered incumbent on him to observe. He used to say the world always treats you as you treat it: they could not entertain nor go into society, and so as they avoided the world, it was no wonder the world avoided them and left them

to themselves. All would come right in the end. His wife would, doubtless, regain her health and strength, and be able to go out more, and they should be able to ask friends to their house, and matters would right themselves.

One very curious effect of the Indian climate has never received the attention it deserves. Elsewhere, so long as a man or woman gives no colour to a scandalous report, the thing dies out generally, and people cease to believe ill of one whose outward conduct is irreproachable. But in India there seems to be some evil principle at work, or some noxious moral disease that infests the whole tone of society, such a proneness to speak ill of your neighbour, to encourage ill-natured tittle-tattle, such a shameless indifference to truth, such a pitiful eagerness to take advantage of another, as if in every walk in life, in the social as well as the official circle, every man and every woman was a rival to every other man and woman, that society seems to catch at the idea of a scandalous report however infamously unjust, as if it had found a prize. It is a wonder that the blistered tongue has never been set down in the list of Indian diseases.

One reason of this may be, I think, that in India, like every thing else, religion is a Government institution. The chaplain draws his pay

for reading service every Sunday and preaching his sermon. Were he to open his church on a week day, or to intimate that religion was a thing ever to be taken note of except on Sundays, or that people were to have regard to its principles in their conduct in the drawing-room, the cutcherry, the parade-ground, and the battle field, "Indian society" would regard him with a stare, and inquire if he was a missionary.

I was astonished one day to hear that charges would be sent in against my friend Stuart of a serious nature connected with his professional duties.

Much as I dislike being the bearer of bad news, I drove over to his house as soon as I heard it. But bad news travels quick, they say, and prompt as I had been, the news was there before me. I found him just leaving his wife's room in company with the doctor. He attended him to the door, then returned and took my hand; tears were in his eyes.

"I know it all," he said, anticipating from my look what I was about to say. "I know it all, but I do not understand it. God knows, I have laboured and striven to do my duty conscientiously. I know that, somehow, that man Shekh Futtoo is at the bottom of all this, but the threads he weaves his net with are too deeply hidden for me to trace their course. Thank God she is ignorant of it," and—here

he fairly broke down, and added, as he sobbed like a child, "she will remain so till the end."

"Is it indeed so?" said I. "Has the doctor given such a bad report? While there is life there is hope."

"No, no—it is not so—I cannot speak of it just now—I shall be calmer by and by. Sit down and wait here a little, there is a good fellow. I will come in again when I am calmer, and tell you all. This double blow, that has fallen upon me all at once, is too much, I can scarce bear it, I cannot bear it now, but I shall be better by and by."

So saying he left me, and I waited. I heard his voice lowly murmuring in the next room, as he whispered consolation to his pain-stricken wife, he alas more needing consolation to be spoken to him.

By and by he returned. "She is better now," he said: "more easy, and will I think get a little sleep. But the doctor has warned me to anticipate the worst. Yes, it is God's will, but oh! how difficult to understand! Wifeless, childless by the same blow, I shall stand alone to confront the world's cold heartlessness and treachery! Do you know the brigade major has been here, and I am under arrest, and a general court martial assembles as soon as possible. I hope it will not be till I am relieved from duty here. I do hope, I pray that I may

be spared to tend her, to soothe her last moments. If I am away she will not understand it, and it would break her heart to hear of it. Oh! I hope that the secret may be kept from her to the last."

"But she will not believe it. Her faith in your unsullied honour will not be broken."

"No, no; but it would be so difficult to make her understand, and the shock alone would be so sad to witness. Oh! have men no mercy for one another? Do men never pause to think while heaping misery on others, and that they themselves may cry out for mercy and relief and not be heard?"

"But tell me more about it. What charges could they possibly bring against you?"

"A trumped-up charge of receiving money from contractors and conspiracy to defraud the Government, supported I suppose by some lying evidence. Truth I do not fear, but now as I am, broken-hearted, crushed, with only half my usual faculties about me, how am I to confront cunning and malice by skill, patience, and perspicuity? One thing is, if I am only spared to support and console her in the last trial, I do not care what becomes of me. Even honour stained by false calumny seems to me a light thing, compared with this great sorrow that looms before me. And what I dread most of

all is, that sometimes under all this I feel as if my faith in God would almost be shaken."

"No, not that Stuart," said I, shuddering as the shadow of despair for an instant threw a deeper gloom over his saddened features. And I added in a low voice, half speaking to myself: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Soon after this I left him, promising to return on the morrow, and wondering as I drove home how it is you so seldom meet an Indian chaplain in the house of sorrow, where you would find an English clergyman with words of consolation on his lips.

Mrs. Stuart lingered on upon her bed of death much longer than the doctor had expected. Stuart gave himself almost wholly up to her, and seldom left her bedside, or took any interest in the preparations for his approaching trial. Thoroughly imbued with an idea of his guilt, which had by dint of long acceptance of it as an undoubted fact (though it rested only on the baseless foundation of the purest slander malice ever invented,) become familiar to their minds, the members of the court-martial had to go through what was in reality a form, viz., hearing the trial. The case for the prosecution rested on Doolchund's evidence, who swore that he received 10,000 rupees from the contractor in

hard cash the day the contract was signed, for Stuart. The men who brought the money to his house came forward and deposed to the fact, and other native witnesses swore they had taken the cash to Stuart's house and counted it out before him. The contractor produced Doolchund's receipt given in Stuart's name, and showed that he had sublet the contract, though the sub-contractor, who was Beharee, was dead: yet there was plenty of evidence to prove that the articles contracted for had been supplied at fifty per cent. less than the sum tendered and accepted.

Even Stuart's own domestic servants were with meanness (I was going to say unparalleled, but that would be wrong) called to show that his monthly expenditure had far exceeded the income derived from his pay.

He met it all with a simple denial. He could not prove a negative, and he was too broken-hearted to cross-examine the lying witnesses with any effect. He saw that the court were against him from the first, and seemed indifferent to the result. The sentence of course was not immediately made known, but he felt morally certain what it would be.

The thing that grieved him most was his enforced absence from his wife, during the time the trial was proceeding, but happily, she was generally in an unconscious state, and I was

there all day in case she revived, to minister what consolation I could, and disarm her fears and suspicions. At last the farce was over, and Stuart could remain at home to face the reality.

The day that the sentence was promulgated was the last day of his melancholy duties. I went to the house, and finding the drawing-room as usual empty, advanced on tiptoe to the bed-room door. Not a servant was about the place. It seemed as if every living creature had deserted this sorrow-stricken man. I heard no sound, and, anticipating events, lifted the curtain (which it is the custom frequently in Indian houses to suspend across a doorway, so as to ensure privacy without preventing a current of air from entering), and looked in.

He knelt by her bed side with her hand clasped to his lips. As I entered he raised his head, his features almost as wan and pale and worn as her's upon which death had laid its icy touch. He rose and grasped my hand.

"I know it all," he said, "I know the worst, thank God my prayer was heard, and she knows it not! Now welcome poverty, welcome disgrace, I can bear it all,—and more—since she is spared the bitterness."

Stuart was cashiered. Soon afterwards he left Budgepore, intending to seek his fortunes in Australia. He gave me a commission, which was to see that a young cypress tree and some

rose bushes close to a grave in the cemetery were kept watered and tended during the dry season, and that was the last I have heard of him. Yet there was no one in Budgepore who could be made to see through the plot and understand that the whole case against Stuart was a false one.

Such things will, I suppose, one of these days be inquired into.

The barracks were completed under the superintendence of Stuart's successor. They cost seven lacs, that is £70,000, in building. They were not, however, occupied, for when the Commander-in-Chief came round on his tour of inspection, he condemned the site as unhealthy, and summoned a special committee of superintending surgeons, who, it is needless for me to add, quite concurred in His Excellency's opinion.

Being found unhealthy for troops, the barrack rooms were divided into separate apartments, and made over to the families of the uncovenanted servants of Government attached to the civil offices at Budgepore, each family having to pay ten rupees a month rent for the accommodation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATE OF THE FAKIR.

At the conclusion of my last Chapter, I told you that the barracks, after all, were never used for the soldiers. The site was found unhealthy, which is not much to be wondered at, seeing it was selected just in front of what for four or five months in the year was a pestilential marsh. So the buildings were abandoned by the military authorities, and another range of barracks built where you now see them on the high ground to the north of the city.

You will recollect that this was the site originally selected by the committee, but not adopted in consequence of objections raised on the part of the commissioner, objections which were in reality founded on the existence there of an Hindoo fakir's hut and his shrine, and how was

it that they were removed to make way for the beef-eating European?

It happened on this wise. You may readily suppose that the events which preceded Stuart's misfortune made some little impression on an inquiring nature like mine. They set me thinking. Was that man, Beharee, poisoned? And if so, who poisoned him, and what was the motive?

I dare say you have observed how sometimes ideas cross your mind whose association you are utterly unable to trace, but which are, nevertheless, fraught with important consequences, perhaps to yourself, perhaps to others. Very often the most momentous actions of our lives, or conduct that eventuates in some momentous decision influencing much of our future fortunes, is undertaken upon some sudden impulse, some idea or suggestion that comes we know not whence. It seems like inspiration. Perhaps in those cases when really momentous and important consequences are the result, it would not be far wrong to call it inspiration. When less important consequences are involved you call it "a happy thought." Well, it was a happy thought, I suppose, that crossed my mind one day shortly after the events related in my last chapter occurred, as I was riding past the fakir's hut. It came athwart my mind like the shadow of a cloud that suddenly and for a moment obscures

the sunlight on a summer day, the suspicion "that man is concerned in this poisoning business." The idea would not leave me. I turned it over in my mind, I criticised it, I endeavoured to persuade myself it was a baseless, groundless, unjust suspicion; why should I harbour it? "No matter," the idea said to me, "you may treat me just as you please, ridicule me as much as you like—all your mental logic won't affect me in the least. Here I am, and here I intend to stay, till you choose to act upon me."

And the idea did stay, I couldn't get rid of it. I acted on it. Later in the day, after meditating over my folly and trying in vain to talk myself out of it, I summoned a faithful domestic of mine by name Sookha.

"Sookha," said I, taking my cigar out of my mouth (it was the third I had smoked that morning, but the "idea" was solely answerable for that excess), "Sookha, I have an idea."

Sookha folded his hands in an attitude of prayer and replied, rather illogically, "that I was his father and mother."

Then, thought I, in that case, your relation to me is very like that of my idea. "But, listen," I said, aloud. "Do you know that old fakir's hut under the peepul-tree on the common, near the Toghluckabad road?"

"Why shouldn't I know it?" answered the illogical Sookha.

"Very well," said I, "now I'll tell you what you must do. You are a clever man" (a very low salaam followed the abrupt announcement, and a second assurance that I was his father and mother), "you must go and play a little trick for me upon the fakir. Dress yourself up like a villager from your native country, Oude, take a pack on your back and old clouted shoes," —such as the Gibeonites wore when they went to take in the Israelitish host, I added, mentally,—"and go and get into conversation with that old fakir. Tell him you come from a distant part of the country, where in your own village there resides a man who has done you a mortal injury, upon whom you wish to take your revenge. Make up a story, and then get the fakir to sell you exactly as much poison as will kill a man and leave no trace behind. Do you understand? There are some poisons that can be traced in a man by certain devices, which the doctor sahibs, who are very clever, know how to employ, and some that don't leave any trace at all. Make a bargain with the fakir, pretend you are very poor, and get the medicine for as small a sum as you can, and bring it to me."

Sookha made a salaam, and having received his instructions, departed to carry them out.

It was tolerably late that evening, when Sookha returned with a small packet contain-

ing a little whitish-grey powder, which he told me the holy man had assured him was quite sufficient for the purpose, and for which, after some bargaining, he had parted with for eight annas,* or one shilling.

"Very good, Sookha," said I, "now go out and tell the sweeper to catch a pariah dog."

A pariah dog was very easily caught.

I put about a tenth part of the powder on a piece of bread and gave it to the animal, which devoured it eagerly.

I watched it, and in half an hour it was seized with a shivering fit. This was followed by dreadful spasms indicating great pain, vomiting and purging. This was succeeded by a state of collapse, under which the animal sunk, and in two hours it was dead.

So thought I—the idea was not unreasonable in its importunity. Now for the connection between the fakir, Beharee, and this Shekh Futtoo.

The next day I did a foolish thing. "Nemo omnibus horis sapit," which means that a man must make a fool of himself sometimes. And in this case did I, OLD MORTALITY, behave like

* This same thing occurred at another place besides Budgepore; the story was related to me by an officer who had done exactly as I did, and whose suspicions had been aroused by having a valuable horse poisoned close to a bunnea's shop on the road side. This happened near Amritsur a few years ago. The officer who told me the story is now dead.

one bereft of reason. Instead of confiding in my own idea, I outraged the sensitive feelings of that good and trusty friend. I went to consult —I can hardly find it in me to register my own weakness and folly—yes, I went and consulted Dakhil Duftar, of all the people in the world! My idea was so ashamed of me for this act of folly that it completely abandoned me and left me to reap the result of my conduct—failure.

Dakhil Duftar was in his court. He received me most courteously, as he always did, made room for me to seat myself by him on the bench, and stopping the business that was going on, turned to me with an inquiring air.

Most of the amla, or native subordinates about the court, left when the cessation from the current business of the day took place. I was all the better pleased at this, and took no note of the chuprassee who was standing behind Dakhil Duftar's chair brushing away the obsequious flies from his master's head with a chowry. A chowry is a sort of thing like the tail of an animal, with a wooden or ivory handle, used in India to drive away flies from a dinner or breakfast table. Some people who affect state have a man with a chowry always behind their chairs keeping off the flies when engaged in reading or writing. The best instruments of this kind are made from the tail of the yak, the hairs of which are very long, silky and fine.

You might make an excellent chowry with the silken tresses of your ladylove, and a very pleasing and sentimental souvenir it would be. And I dare say an ordinary chignon, unravelled, or combed out, would answer, that is, if chignons do unravel, a little matter upon which I could not speak with certainty, as I am not sufficiently intimate with any lady friend to borrow one to try.

In a few words, I told Dahkil Duftar of my idea and its results. He seemed fully to apprehend its importance, and said he would at once have the fakir's hut searched.

"Would it not be better," I said, "to conduct the search yourself. I can take my servant down there, who will show you the spot and how the poison was concealed."

"Yes, yes," said he, "that will be the best way; one is so much in the power of the amla, you know, that I always like to do these things for myself. I never trust them on a delicate inquiry of this kind, never."

So it was arranged that as soon as the day's work was over, we should drive down together to the fakir's hut and conduct this investigation.

Was it by accident or coincidence that just at this juncture the chuprassee, who had been doing the chowry business all this time, found it was necessary that he should be relieved. At a

sign from him, another man stepped up to take his place; he resigned the instrument of ease into his successor's hand, and disappeared.

"Does that man understand what we have been saying?" said I, uneasily.

"Who?" said Dakhil Duftar, rather astonished. "What, that chuprassee? My dear fellow, what an absurd question! No, we are not quite so surrounded with spies as all that. He is one of the dullest and stupidest men in the whole establishment—understand English! he scarce understands his own mother tongue, let alone English."

Nevertheless, that stupid dull man understood English just as well as I, and if he had not he would not have been where he was. Conceive the opportunities a man has who is always present, always looking over the collector's shoulder, hearing his private conversation with friends, his remarks on cases "sub judice!" Be ignorant of English! of what use would he be? No, it is not so the machinery is managed by which the wires are worked that make the dolls and puppets dance.

When I got home and told Sookha he was to go with me to point out to me and the collector sahib where the fakir kept his store of poisonous drugs, he was as much affected as if he had himself taken some of the poison. He threw himself at my feet and grovelled in the dust; he

besought me with tears in his eyes to spare him, he pleaded in the most piteous tone, he asked what fault had he committed that he should be subjected to such punishment; he called to mind his faithful services to me, extending over many years, his devotion, his zeal, the very identical service of the day before which had brought him into all this trouble. In vain I expostulated with him, reasoned with him, persuaded, scolded, commanded;—he retained the same attitude, grovelling at my feet like a criminal who had just been condemned to death by my mandate. My heart is not made of stone, and I could not help feeling for the man's distress. But why all this fuss?

The day he accompanied me on such an errand would be his last, he said. The fakir would be taken to prison, perhaps punished, and upon his, the informer's, head, would fall all the odium of that deed; besides, it was well known that the fakir had powerful friends—he had friends in the police, among the jail establishment, in the court amla, and some said that even the commissioner sahib's serishtedar was numbered among his adherents. Finally, the principle of combativeness or antagonism, which even in the most abject animals may be developed by despair, evinced itself. He declared he would not go. I might beat him, torture him, hang him, but go he would not, and if dragged to the spot

he would declare he knew nothing and had seen nothing.

I tried the motive of avarice. I offered him as much money as would make him comfortable for life, but he rejected it. I assured him of protection, of the ægis of the very collector sahib himself, the man shook his head and would have none of it. The case was hopeless. I turned away in despair, angry with Sookha, but still more angry with myself, for, lo! my idea flashed across my brain again, and said to me almost as plainly as if it had spoken out in so many words, "Bah, couldn't you have foreseen this?"

I need not occupy much time by relating how after this Dakhil Duftar and I had a fool's errand. The fakir expected our visit with as much certainty as old Mrs. Tabby expects her friend whom she has invited to tea, when the tea is made and the muffins are being kept warm at the fire. Search! We might have as well searched Budgepore for an honest man as have looked for poisonous drugs in the fakir's hut, or anywhere near it.

It's an ill wind, however, that blows no good. And this miserable failure of mine, nevertheless, resulted in poetic justice being done. A few months more and the fakir was on his way to a penal settlement, and his shrine had been removed by the department of public works! For Shekh Futtoo now perceived that the hounds

were not far from his scent. The fakir knew a good deal too much. At any moment the secret of his dealing in poisons might be out, and then there was no doubt about it, the disclosure of his, the Shekh's, complicity with his guilt would inevitably follow. He knew human nature pretty well, did the Shekh, and the nature of the men he had to deal with. The slightest accident—a straw blown by the winds of heaven—might at any time reveal the whole story of the fakir's guilty trade. There were at least a hundred men in the city of Budgepore who were cognizant of it. But the fakir, ever since the great Shekh had let himself fall into his toils, felt perfectly secure. No harm could happen as long as he was befriended by him. But once in danger, and that influence not exerted to befriend him, and he had hinted as much, he would reveal the whole story of the death of the man Beharee, and the circumstance that led to it, the purchase of the poison by the Shekh, and beyond this the fakir cared not to know.

It was not an easy task the Shekh had now to accomplish. The fakir was respected in the city, and held in repute pretty well all over the district. He was no ordinary foe to be trampled upon at once—no ordinary prey to be entrapped in the usual stereotyped manner, by a formal charge, and perjured witnesses and confession to police under the influence of torture. The blow,

if struck at all, must be a grand *coup*—a blow that would annihilate the fakir's reputation for sanctity, at the same moment that it laid him low at his rival's feet. And it was a grand *coup* —a master-piece of amla audacity.

An examination of the jail records showed the Shekh that about ten years before, a man whose descriptive roll was among those records, and which answered in every particular with the external appearance of the fakir, allowing for changes consequent upon lapse of time, had been sentenced to transportation for life for an attempted murder. There were hundreds of others who had been transported also from Budgepore within the period embraced by that bulky file of records, which the Shekh so cautiously scanned. But there were two reasons why this particular one was selected. One reason was that the descriptive roll answered to the fakir's appearance, and the other was that in this particular instance it was recorded that the prisoner who had been transported had died at the penal settlement. So far, well.

One day, shortly after this, a petition was presented to Dakhil Duftar, from a jemadar of police in the Budgepore district, which set forth that the writer, having recently been promoted, and being moved thereto by his zeal for the Sirkar, or Government, wished to rectify a great error he had been the instrument of many years

ago. When engaged in the duty of escorting a prisoner condemned to transportation, from Budgepore to Calcutta, whose name was Sungram Sing, the party of police in charge, which consisted of himself and three others, had allowed this particular prisoner to escape. It had happened one night, when the escort with the prisoners under their charge, of whom there were ten, in irons, were bivouacked under a tree near the village of Makampore, in the Ghazeepore district. When the writer of the petition and his comrades were asleep, a rush was made upon them by several men. Sungram Sing was seized, and his irons being struck off, restored to liberty; and he escaped, but one of his liberators remained behind after the rest had run away, and told the discomfited police that they need be under no apprehension of suffering for their negligence, for that he, being inclined thereto for divers weighty reasons, which it did not concern the police to scan too closely, was ready and willing to go into transportation in place of Sungram Sing, and to undergo that worthy man's sentence as deputy. The number of prisoners they had to deliver up to the authorities in Calcutta would thus be complete, no inquiry would be made, and all parties would be satisfied.

Sungram Sing having fairly escaped out of their hands, the police had consulted their own

interests, and consented to the arrangement, putting the substitute into the irons that had so recently impeded the free action of Sungram's limbs. And this very identical Sungram Sing, the petition went on to say, was now to be seen in the guise of a fakir living under the peepul tree, on the common outside the city of Budgepore, on the Toghluckabad road.

After hearing the petition read to him (it is the custom in India for all documents to be read to officials, whether they are petitions, or statements of cases, or depositions, or death warrants, or what not, so that the official hears and signs, if the document be for signature, what the reader wishes or chooses to make him hear; for of the document itself in the vernacular, he could not, if he tried, read one word,) Dakhil Duftar passed an order summoning the writer to his presence.

He made his appearance in due time, and was examined by Dakhil Duftar as to the facts stated in his petition. His answers were consistent, and the story he told seemed plausible, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of the fakir.

I was a good deal surprised to hear of it, for from what little I had been able to gather about the fakir's influence with the amla, I did not expect he would meet with any molestation from that quarter. After thinking over it for some time, I began to see a glimmer of light breaking

in upon the affair. What motive had Shekh Futtoo for wishing to compass this man's destruction?" A very obvious one; my suspicions became then more confirmed.

"The villain is caught in his own net," was my remark to Dakhil Duftar, after he had told me about the discovery of the escaped convict, though I had of course heard of it before.

"What do you mean?" said he.

"Why, that although the man is altogether innocent of this charge, he deserves the fate that is impending over him."

"Innocent! What a fellow you are. How can he be innocent? Why here's the very man who had him in charge, who went with him half way to Calcutta, from whom he escaped, who must have seen him every day—he swears to his identity."

"Very likely," said I, "and what does the man say himself?"

"Oh, as a matter of course, he swears he has been there for the last twenty years under that tree, as if that was likely you know. As if it was likely that he could be there all that time, and not a single soul in all Budgepore can be found to say he ever saw him there more than five or six years back. Why if it was true, there must be a thousand men and women at least in Budgepore who could have recognised him."

"And will no one come forward?"

"No; I tell you the thing's absurd. Here is the descriptive roll answering exactly to his appearance. Here are three police constables who took him down in charge, from whom he escaped, and seventeen other witnesses, who all swear he is Sungram Sing, and no one else!"

I will not detain you over this story. The fakir was committed for trial, upon the charge of having escaped from custody, when under sentence of transportation. The seventeen witnesses all swore to his identity, so, of course, did the policemen. He was found guilty and sentenced to transportation, and did not *escape* this time. At least half the city of Budgepore knew the truth, but not a soul would come forward. Perhaps they did not do so for the same reason that I did not, for I knew perfectly well that the old fakir had been there certainly for five-and-twenty years, as I had seen him scores of times off and on during that period. But I was determined to leave the old villain to his fate, for I had found out that he made a practice of dealing in poison, and I am sure he was guilty of Beharee's death.

So he met with his deserts, but not in the way intended. And had he been really an innocent man, as I suspect very few of these fakirs really are, it is dreadful to think of the ease and simplicity with which he was got rid of, for of course nothing that he might say now

about the sale of poison to Shekh Futtoo or anyone else, would be believed.

So the old fakir went to end his days at Penang, and the shrine and hut were removed, and the beef-eating European smokes his pipe over the spot erst sacred to the lingam. The well has been walled in, to prevent the children from the barracks falling in, but it is still used for the soldiers, for the water is as sweet and wholesome as it ever was.

CHRONICLE V.

THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S VISIT, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

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THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR'S VISIT, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

It was a great day for Budgepore when His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor came to our station on one of his tours. He was expected on Saturday, and was to stay over Sunday, and leave on Monday morning.

Great preparations were made to give the dignitary a fitting reception, and Crawford, who was then our collector and magistrate, looked forward to getting a little "kudos," for the condition in which his district was. And I must say he deserved it. Crawford was an energetic man, straightforward, and wonderfully free from the prejudices which detract so much from the usefulness of most officials in his position. He was fully alive to the responsibilities of his office, and knew well what a curse to the country a magistrate and collector becomes, as soon as he allows himself to be made a tool of by his serish-

tadar, and the natives about the courts. As far as possible he looked into everything for himself; and never allowed himself to be biased by the opinions, or guided by the intrigues of the amla or police. He was a man of active habits, and spent as much of his time as he could spare from other duties in his district. And his district was in first-rate order. It was commonly said, that as soon as you came into the Budgepore district, you were safe from being robbed. The fact is, Crawford carried things with a high hand sometimes, and not seldom set aside the law and regulations quietly, when he found they interfered with the public weal. If he caught a man out in a crime, he would not unfrequently punish him on the spot, without waiting for the tardy process of even summary trial. But he never did this except he either saw with his own eye, or knew from his own knowledge, that he had the real culprit in his hands. All the badly disposed feared him. The police and amla hated him. The bulk of the native community liked him.

One little thing he did on the occasion of the Lieutenant-Governor's visit, illustrates his character. It got wind that there were several natives of a village called Hajeepore, who had been summarily punished by him for cattle-stealing, or some such crime, who had prepared and were going to present to the Lieutenant-

Governor a petition, setting forth how unjustly they had been treated.

These men he clapped in jail, and kept them there till His Honour had left the district, when they were released. This stroke of policy was an effectual one. Had the Hajeepore petition been presented, some five hundred others would have followed. But no sooner was it noised abroad that the petitioners were thus taken care of, than the other five hundred petitions were as speedily as possible committed to the flames.

At that time we had an amateur choir in our little church. Our padre, whom I shall call Mr. Shanks, was a little spare man, with reddish sandy hair, and wore shoes. The choir was conducted by Mrs. Crawford, and by Mrs. Hamilton the wife of our officiating Sessions Judge. When I say the choir was conducted by these ladies, I do not of course mean that they both conducted it together. That would have been quite as great a feat as squaring the circle, or discovering perpetual motion. What I mean is, that Mrs. Crawford usually managed it, and as she was not able to be there always (for she very often accompanied her husband into the district), when she was absent, Mrs. Hamilton took the duties. You will not forget that Hamilton was only *officiating* Sessions Judge, the difference therefore between the rank and standing of these ladies was not so very great.

Of course when so great an event as the visit of the Lieutenant-Governor was expected, all the residents were in the station, and the consequence was, that the choir bid fair to be well attended.

There were, besides the ladies I have mentioned, other members—Mrs. Dickenson, whose husband was a Lieutenant in the 80th Native Infantry, then stationed at Budgepore. Dickenson married as an Ensign, under the impression that an officer could live more economically married than single. He was very much in love, but I am sorry to say it is too true, that when poverty comes in at the door, love very often flies out at the window; and, before three years were over, poor Dickenson found himself with an increasing family, and he also made the discovery, that the notion of a man's expenses not being necessarily increased by his marriage, was a sad fallacy. At the time I speak of they had seven children. It is true he had meantime got his lieutenancy and the adjutancy. But these aids came too late, he was hopelessly in debt, and what is worse, broken-hearted.

The following year he died, killed by his cares, if ever a man was killed by anything. And Mrs. Dickenson found herself one morning with nothing but a single change of clothes for herself and each of her children, and her husband's sword. The Committee of Adjustment put

their seal upon everything else in the house. Dickenson was carried to his last home, and a subscription was got up in the station to help to pay his widow's expenses to England, whither she betook herself; and it was pleasing to find that what with her own and her childrens' pensions, she was more comfortably off and happier than she had been since the first year of her marriage.

But I am digressing. The rest of the choir was composed of one of the young officers of the 80th, and three or four of the Christian drummers, as they were called. "Christian" drummers, I have often thought that adjective a good illustration of the principle of derivation involved in the phrase *lucus a non lucendo*. I am not one of those who believe that the calamities of '57 should necessarily be regarded as a judgment of Providence. But assuredly if there was any thing in the old system that reflected disgrace upon the officers of the old Bengal army, and represented responsibilities ignored, it was the frightful state of ignorance and immorality in which the so-called Christian drummers of the old native army were suffered to live.

One morning that week I got a note from Shanks, asking me to go over and breakfast with him. I went, and found him in a ludicrous state of perplexity. The fact was, he said, there

was to be a choir-meeting at the church that morning for practice, and the ladies were anxious to have some special musical addition to the service in honour of the Lieutenant-Governor, who was sure to attend church, and Mr. Shanks was afraid there might be a little difference of opinion, tastes differed, and so on —in fact——well, in short, he was nervous, and asked me if I could accompany him and give the aid of my advice if necessary.

"Certainly," said I, "I will go with pleasure. But it seems to me that although it may be quite right and proper for civilians' wives instead of singing to 'the praise and glory of God,' to sing to the praise and glory of the Lieutenant-Governor, I think if I were you, Shanks, I should set my face against any interference with the usual services."

Poor Shanks! I knew him at Oxford. He belonged to Exeter, and got a third the year Mandamus, who was lately Attorney-General, got his double first. Mandamus knew him too, and used his influence to get him an Indian chaplaincy. He was a bachelor, and dreadfully shy, timid in ladies' society, and very much in awe of the two fair beings who had taken his church by storm.

That shyness which some men feel in ladies' society, and which seems to be affected so much by the dress, is a curious characteristic of human

nature, and worthy a deeper study than I have time to give the subject. A man who is fearfully shy and timid in the presence of a well-dressed woman, will be comparatively bold and forward with a badly-dressed one. What is the reason?

It would seem that the act of dressing elegantly and tastefully has some of the properties of magnetism which repels as well as attracts. For you see some men repelled just in proportion as others are attracted by that indefinable something, I suppose I may call it "force"—force means anything you like now-a-days, from an arm chair to an indivisible atom of infinity—which indicates the presence of a well-dressed woman.

Is it the rustling of silk and muslin, or the fragrance of "Early Spring Flowers," or any other of Piesse and Lubin's productions, or the combination of colours, or the loveliness of the bonnet of the latest Paris cut, or the edge of an embroidered or frilled petticoat peeping out from underneath the dress, or is it the quiet self-possession and graceful demeanour of ladies accustomed to move in good society, that makes the heart of a man constituted like Shanks sink within him as a stone, when he comes under the influences which to men of another stamp are so attractive? Shanks would have gone to a funeral quite cheerfully,

but to meet Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Hamilton —poor wretch, he was afraid. I call him poor wretch rather with reference to his subsequent fate, than his present fears. Unwilling, because too shy, to find a wife from among his equals in birth and education, he got caught, when on furlough, by the daughter of a lodging-house-keeper in London, and married her, and didn't he lead a life of it!

There was a great consultation at the church. Mrs. Crawford had some high church tendencies, and was bent upon having an anthem in the proper place, of course in the middle of the prayers. Mrs. Hamilton with a like object in view, but opposite tendencies, insisted on having "From Greenland's icy mountains," after the sermon instead of the anthem. I did not myself see the aptitude of the selection, but I thought I would not expose my want of taste by asking. Perhaps the "icy mountain" might have some reference to Nynee Tal or Simla.

Shanks of course was referred to, and he, as weak men always do, tried a middle course. My opinion was asked, and I recommended Brady and Tate, Ps. 15, not with any special reference to the present occasion, but because I thought it ought to be sung by order of the Governor-General in Council in every church in the Mofussil once every Sunday, and twice

on Sunday in all hill stations, the 3rd verse being repeated. You recollect it, of course.

> Who never did a slander forge
> A neighbour's fame to wound,
> Or hearken to a false report
> By malice whispered round.

I need hardly add that after making my suggestion, I basely deserted Shanks and left him. The result was a compromise, and the Lieutenant-Governor had both the anthem and "From Greenland's icy mountains."

On Sunday evening we all dined with His Honour. This state ceremony was not marked with that funereal gloom that distinguished the state camp dinners of one of his successors (the late Lieutenant-Governor) where you hardly knew which was the coldest, the plates, the dinner, the reception, or the reception tent. Still, it was stiff enough. It was a cold winter evening, and did not feel a pleasant change from the comfort of one's "ain fireside" to the "cold blast" of a large double-poled tent, though that was the Lieutenant-Governor's. When I got there all the other guests had arrived. The ladies were sitting in a semi-circle, the gentlemen standing about in groups, no one saying a word, but ladies and all looking exactly as if they had all come there to be wigged. Indeed, I thought the whole scene

would have made an excellent group for Madame Tussaud. His Honour was standing with his back to a stove in the centre of the tent, conversing slowly, as if anxious not to exhaust the subject too rapidly, upon the weather, with Colonel Sungeen. No one else spoke a single word.

The duties of an aide-de-camp, except in the field, are not those which call into play the noblest parts of man's nature. Still I have always thought it very unreasonable that a man should grumble at having no more onerous or responsible duties to perform than to dress well and sit all the morning in a nicely furnished drawing-room, and hand ladies to and from their carriages and pass them through the ceremony of introduction. Any way, whatever a man is paid for doing he ought to do it, as Solomon says, with all his might. Now, his Honor's aides-de-camp, I am bound to say, did not bend the undivided energies of their minds to the performance of the duties which their destiny had allotted to them. I am rather afraid they thought, or affected to think it beneath them, the consequence of which was on the present occasion that they managed the introduction so clumsily, that they left the impression on His Honor's mind that Mrs. Crawford was Mrs. Hamilton, and that Mrs. Hamilton was Mrs. Crawford.

It was a great relief when dinner was an-

nounced. But I doubt whether if an earthquake had set all the tables and chairs dancing, there would have been as much consternation as now took possession of the Budgepore monde. For His Honor, on dinner being announced, walked slowly and with dignified mien up to where the ladies were seated, passed quite close to Mrs. Hamilton and offering his arm to Mrs. Crawford, led her off. Ten thousand thunders! Had the earth opened at Mrs. Hamilton's feet, and the dark mysteries concealed beneath the roots of the everlasting mountains been revealed in the depth of the yawning abyss, it would have been to her, comparatively, an incident of slight importance. For a whole month after that, whenever any two of the residents of Budgepore met together, that event formed the sole topic of discourse. Every conceivable motive and many inconceivable motives were ascribed to the Lieutenant-Governor, who, as you know, had merely acted under a mistake. Crawford, as you may easily gather from the little I have said about him, was no favourite with his brother officers. A man who will choose out his own course of action instead of walking in the beaten track, never is a favourite with his fellows. If he succeeds in life, they envy him, if he does not succeed, they hate him. The Lieutenant-Governor had spoken highly in praise of the state in which he found Crawford's district, and

now every one took for granted he was to be promoted immediately over the heads of his seniors. Mrs. Hamilton's feelings did not recover the shock they received from His Honor's extraordinary disregard of the laws of society, all the evening. Nor were they at all softened by an unfortunate remark he made later in the evening. With the best intention in the world, and acting still as Lieutenant-Governors sometimes, but *very rarely* do, on incorrect information, he went up to Mrs. Hamilton and complimented her on the success of her efforts in the choir, and especially on the beauty of the anthem.

Next day the camp took its departure, and Budgepore was left to chew the cud. The Hajeporee petitioners were soon afterwards released, for Budgepore was only two marches from the next district. Small-pox was raging in the jail where they had been temporarily confined, two of the petitioners died of the disease in jail, a third died of it in his village, and the disease having been thus taken into the district, it raged for several months, till whole villages were nearly depopulated. It was so bad that Dr. Macbole was sent to write a report, which he did, filling therewith twenty sheets of foolscap. The report was sent to the Secretary to Government, North-West Provinces, who had it docketed and tied with red tape and safely placed in a box.

The hot season of that year Mrs. Crawford spent at Mussoorie. Mrs. Hamilton was there also. I had a great regard for Crawford and his wife, and was much pained to hear various reports unfavourable to the character of the latter. All my letters from Mussoorie, written by gossiping correspondents, contained some allusion to the way Mrs. Crawford was talked about. I need hardly say, that knowing so well as I do how often reports of this kind have no foundation whatever, except in malice, I put no faith in them whatever. But they reached Crawford's ear and he was exceedingly indignant.

He refused all explanation, he would not even ask for any. His wife, conscious of her innocence, resented his unworthy suspicions, and an angry altercation ensued between husband and wife, who had hitherto lived together on the most affectionate terms. There are few things more painful to see than a quarrel between husband and wife, both of whom love each other dearly and would give the world, if they could be reconciled, yet neither will be the first to offer to make amends. Bitter thoughts and angry feelings take the place of warm affection, and grow in intensity from the very necessity each is under of justifying the course they are pursuing to their own consciences. So the breach grows wider and the heart grows sorer,

till at last, in desperation, one or the other takes a decided step and resolves to banish from the heart all former feelings of attachment. If it is the husband who takes the first step, he becomes a misogynist and rails against all the sex. If it is the woman, she not unfrequently gives colour to all the previously unfounded suspicions against her, by engaging in real and dangerous flirtation. Such, I am sorry to say, was the case with Crawford and his wife. Both had been warmly attached to one another till the demon jealousy, aroused by scandal, came between them. They were, each, too proud to acknowledge their faults, or to seek to make up the quarrel. Without returning to Budgepore, she made arrangements to go to England, and as he coldly intimated his acquiescence in the plan, and tried to persuade himself that he saw in it a fresh proof of the suspicions he entertained, she went straight down from Mussoorie to Calcutta and sailed for England in the *Hindostân*. They never met again.

I felt for Crawford, but he was too reserved a man to admit even me very closely into his confidence. I, however, went up to Mussoorie, determined to worm out the affair, and trace the unhappy scandal to its source. It was not till the following year I succeeded in doing so, and then I found it had originated entirely with Mrs. Hamilton, who, actuated as I cannot but

believe by unworthy motives, and with deliberation, spread a report injurious to her old friend's character. What she said was, speaking of Mrs. Crawford to a lady notoriously fond of tittle tattle, and to whom you had only got to breathe a word in confidence with a request that it might go no further, to ensure its being all over the station by the next day—what she said was, that she went into Mrs. Crawford's one day, and found her with Captain Smith, "and she saw—well, she would not like to say what she saw." That was all. The seed was sown, the snowball was set rolling, and the happiness of two loving hearts was marred for ever this side the grave.

Crawford, I am sorry to say, did not bear up against his troubles. Perhaps he wanted that alone which could have borne him up against them,—religious principle. He tried to drown his grief by intemperate drinking, and while he was to the last degree bitter against the opposite sex, he nevertheless adopted habits which showed how little independent he was of them. Thus, when people heard of his domestic troubles, they used to pity Mrs. Crawford, and say, "no wonder she had to leave a man who led the life her husband did." So you see, the Lieutenant-Governor's visit to Budgepore was followed by some rather important consequences.

CHRONICLE VI.

THE OVERSEER.

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THE OVERSEER.

I HAVE already given some description of Budgepore, its locale, society, &c., and shall therefore say no more on that head here.

In 183—there was an overseer in the Public Works Department stationed there, named Thomas Clarke. He had been a private soldier, and had taken his discharge and obtained employment in the department, in which he remained till his death, which took place under the most distressing circumstances, so distressing that it is painful for me to recall them to memory, and put them down in writing.

It happened that the head native in the department under Clarke, named Omichund, embezzled some public money. This Omichund was a sharp man, one of a type very commonly met with. He was an eminently useful man, and he knew it, and, native-like, took every pains to get into the good graces of

the officials. If any of them wanted anything done to their houses or gardens, Omichund was sent for. He of course never took a contract himself, that would have been improper, as he was in Government employ, but he always brought a man to take the contract, and the work was always well done, and on reasonable terms, Omichund himself superintending so far as to see that the interest of the "sahibs" were well looked after, and the "sahibs" themselves put to no trouble. He was a wealthy man, and kept a number of horses, and whenever any of the "sahibs" wanted to lay a dak to a neighbouring station, or to the foot of the hills, which was only about sixty miles off, Omichund's horses were always promptly lent. In this and a thousand and one other ways, which I need not particularise, this man managed to worm himself into the attachment of the local authorities, especially the magistrate, whose wife went to the hills steadily every year, and who was accordingly glad to get up to the hills himself once or twice during the season, on which occasions Omichund's horses were found very convenient.

Poor Clarke was a good, honest, quiet sort of fellow; he married when he got the appointment, and at the time I speak of had six children, his pretty wife still retaining her good looks. She was a neat, nice little body, the daughter of European parents. Her father had

been an old pensioner, and Budgepore being a favourite station, with a number of little bungalows and gardens all about in the outskirts of the town, a good many old pensioners made it their place of residence. Mrs. Clarke's housekeeping was perfection, as, with their narrow means she managed to bring up her children and look after the house, which was always tidy and well kept, as well as the pretty little garden which surrounded it. Her children were always clean and nicely dressed, and she herself, like a good wife, was very careful about her personal appearance, and was always ready to welcome her husband with a smile when he came back from his office or his work in the evening. They were very regular attendants at our little church, and altogether, though the great folk in the station troubled not their heads about them, I will be bound to say there was no happier home and no more decent, respectable family in Budgepore, than that of Clarke's.

Poor fellow! He was too conscientious to allow the misdeeds of Omichund to pass unnoticed, and though, as he told me afterwards, he had a presentiment no good would come of it, he thought it his duty to bring the charge he did against him for misappropriating the public money. He did not succeed in proving it, though there could have been no moral doubt that the man was guilty. However, Omichund

asserted his innocence, and what with the extreme difficulty of getting any witnesses to come forward against a man of so much influence, and what with the good opinion always entertained of Omichund by the officers in the station, the charge fell to the ground, and Clarke incurred some odium for having brought it.

It was about a year after this that Mrs. Clarke came over to me one morning crying bitterly, to tell me that her husband had been that morning arrested on a charge of murder, and the magistrate was then investigating the case. In reply to my question, she told me that the night before her husband had been called out to speak to a man who had come to see him on some business connected with the roads. He went out, taking in his hand a little switch cane which he always carried with him, especially when he went out after dark, because their garden was infested with snakes, and once or twice he had narrowly escaped treading upon one. He came back rather disturbed in mind, and told her he had done what he very seldom did, struck the man across the shoulder with the switch, because he had been grossly insolent to him. He expressed regret for what he had done, but said he had never been so insulted before by any native or European. They shortly after retired for the night. After they had been in bed about half an hour,

Mrs. Clarke, who happened to be awake, heard sounds in the garden, as if people were about. Apprehending thieves, she got up and looked out, and saw the figures of one or two men leaving the garden. As there did not appear to be any cause for alarm, and she supposed the men had come to steal a few flowers and shrubs perhaps, and as they had now left the place, and as there was very little prospect of overtaking them, she went to bed again and did not disturb her husband.

Next morning at day-break there was a great fuss. Some police came in and declared that there was the dead body of a man lying under the trees in the garden. Clarke was horrified and rushed out to see, and sure enough there was a corpse there, just on the very spot where he had stood the night before and had the altercation of which I have spoken. Well, the usual proceeding was taken, a *post mortem* was made, and the doctor declared the man had died of a ruptured spleen.

I did what I could to comfort poor Mrs. Clarke, and went down to the magistrate's cutcherry to see what was going on.

Two policemen had just been examined, who swore that the night before they had been on the road outside Clarke's garden and had distinctly heard an altercation between him and a native. They also swore they heard the

sound of a blow, and a noise in the branches of the shrubs as of a body falling. In the morning they found the body of the deceased, and by it a garden hoe.

The case looked bad. I felt for poor Clarke, for I knew him to be a quiet, good sort of man, who would never intentionally have done any harm to a fellow creature. A native woman, a prostitute of the town, next swore that she knew the deceased, and that he had told her the evening before that he had to go and speak to Clarke, and that he was rather afraid to go because he had reason to believe the sahib was angry with him. Clarke was thereupon sent to jail, and the case went down to Calcutta to go before the grand jury.

Never shall I forget the look of distress and misery on Mrs. Clarke's face that afternoon after she had taken a sorrowful leave of her husband. He said to her at parting, "Keep up your spirits, Annie, and look after the poor children. And whatever you do, never believe me guilty of this crime. I am innocent of it, as innocent as you, but it is a plot, I know, set on foot by Omichund, who vowed he would be revenged on me. Let us put our trust in God, and whatever happens submit patiently to His will."

This occurred in the month of May. A burning hot wind was blowing at the time, and

as European prisoners were scarce in Budgepore, there was very little, in fact no accommodation for them in the jail there. Clarke was confined in a small square room, with but imperfect ventilation. A punkah was allowed him indeed, but it was pulled by the prisoners, who did not see why they should be made to work gratis for the benefit of a fellow prisoner, and you may be sure that they did not exert themselves very much. The darogah of the jail was the son-in-law of Omichund, and this man did every thing he could (and it was a good deal) to make poor Clarke's confinement as irksome and painful as it could possibly be. His wife was allowed to visit him daily, but the darogah took care that a native understrapper should be in the room at the time, who insulted and annoyed them in every possible way. She used to send his meals to her husband, but they had to pass through the hands of the jail officials, who brought them to him in such a disgusting state, covered with flies and filth, that it was impossible for him to touch them, while the water given him to drink was more like soup than water, mixed with mud and all sorts of impurities. Of course Clarke complained to the doctor who regularly visited him, and the doctor reported his complaint to the magistrate, who sent for the jail officials and examined them; you may easily understand

what sort of answer *they* gave. The darogah then complained to the magistrate of Clarke's violence. He said he was so abusive that he was afraid to go near him: and once or twice he had threatened to use violence, and did on one occasion strike one of the jail officials. Again the magistrate examined the jail officials, and you may easily understand what they said. Poor Clarke was then put under constraint and kept handcuffed, in which state the police and jailors frequently jeered at him and spat in his face. All these things were repeated to me by Mr. Clarke, and I of course called on the magistrate and endeavoured to enlist his sympathy for the poor man. It was of no avail. He said Clarke's account of the treatment he was subjected to rested only on his own statement, whereas that of the darogah was confirmed by as many as a dozen witnesses. Neither I nor the doctor could do anything. Of course we understood how the case really was, but what could we say in reply to the magistrate's averment, which was in itself true, except that we believed Clarke's statement and disbelieved that of the natives. All he said was, that he differed with us, and believed the natives, and that as a magistrate he was bound to believe and act upon the evidence of a number of officials rather than the unsupported statement of a prisoner. Of course they took

care that none of these outrages should be committed while any of us were by, but we could not remain with him all day, and no sooner were our backs turned, than the tormentors commenced their malicious work upon their victim.

It is a painful story. Mrs. Clarke, from going backwards and forwards to the jail in the heat of the sun, was prostrated with fever, and the consolation of her visits was thenceforward denied to her husband. This last blow proved too much, and I was one day called to go and see him in a hurry, for he was very ill. I went with the doctor, and found him in that stifling hot room stretched upon his wretched charpoy, with the shadow of death plainly darkening over him.

There had been one or two cases of cholera in the jail, and the depression caused by the painful circumstances in which he had been placed, exposed him very much to the influence of that disease which seems to affect the mental almost as much as the corporeal part of our frame. He was past recovery when I went in. I had put my prayer-book in my pocket as I left the house, for a presentiment came upon me that something of the sort was the matter. He took my hand as I seated myself beside him, and in a very faint voice asked after his wife. Alas! I had no good news to tell him. She

was worse. He murmured, "It is the will of God." He said in answer to my question that he felt no pain, though he had suffered dreadfully during the night. He was calm and resigned. I poured into his willing ear the consolatory words of Holy Writ, and remained with him till the last, and so did the doctor, and when we both came away, we were so affected that it was long before we could speak. On our way home we visited poor Clarke's cottage. Alas, what a change was here! The little rooms which used to be so neat, and tidy and cheerful, were all in disorder, the carpets unswept for days, the furniture untouched. The children had all been taken away by a kind neighbour, the wife of one of the pensioners, who lived close by. Mrs. Clarke was the only occupant of the once happy home, besides a sweeper woman who had been brought up in the family and remained with her in her hour of trial.

Why linger over these reminiscences.

The bereaved widow was herself sinking. The fever had left her, indeed, but she was too much weakened to rally. In a faint voice she asked after her husband. I was obliged to tell her. Poor soul! it would be a comfort rather than a distress to her to know, that he she loved had already gone before her and was even now waiting to welcome her with his old loving smile. She closed her eyes; my hand was still

on hers. I felt a convulsive twitching of her slender fingers, and saw her breast heave with a stifled sob, and all was over. She had met her husband in a land where the cry of the widow, and the orphan, and the oppressed, is never pleaded in vain.

The house, and garden and furniture were sold the week after, and Omichund purchased them.

The next week the case was sent back from Calcutta. The grand jury had thrown out the bill.

Ten years afterwards I was talking one day to an old mali, or gardener, who had been three or four years in my service. His child had been ill of fever, and some quinine and medicines I had given the old mali for him brought the patient round. He expressed the utmost gratitude to me, and volunteered the following story, which he said he had long wanted to tell me, but had felt afraid. It was, that ten years before he had been bribed by a present of six rupees to go one evening to the house of a "sahib" who lived there (pointing in the direction of what had been poor Clarke's cottage), and to be insolent to the sahib, so as, if possible, to induce him to strike him; he was then to go away to a village in another district several miles off, where, as long as he remained, he would receive two rupees a month. He did so, and had received the two rupees regularly

for four or five years, when the payments suddenly ceased; and he then resolved, why he hardly knew, to come back to Budgepore with his family for work. He did not know what he was paid for nor why he had been asked to insult the "sahib," and induce him to use violence. But as he left the garden that evening, he recollected, he said, seeing two policemen on the road outside, and by them, underneath the wall, there was something wrapped up in cloth, which looked like a man's body. He was afraid to take any notice of it or to say anything about it. But he had heard that it was Omichund who had supplied the money which was paid to him.

CHRONICLE VII.

A LAW-SUIT.

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A LAW-SUIT.

I HAVE been unfortunate enough to be involved in one or two law-suits, during my residence at Budgepore. One of them resulted from my having foolishly invested a little money in the purchase of a native house in the city. I did not live there, of course, or intend living there, but I let the house for a very decent rent. I had not been in possession long, before a rich native built a brick wall up within two feet in front of the door of the house. This, as you may easily see, was inconvenient to my tenants (one of whom was rather stout), and they all immediately vacated. I was obliged to bring an action against the trespasser. It was filed in the Court of the native Civil Judge, of course, that being the court of first instance in which all original suits must be tried, unless the European judge can be prevailed upon by having good and satisfactory cause shown, to

send for any particular case, and try it in his own court. My case was numbered 35, and a day fixed for first hearing. Well, I went there on the day fixed, and then found I was mistaken; the number of the suit was 135 and not 35, and another day was fixed. I went, and to my astonishment found the suit was not numbered 135 at all, but 235. Again a postponement. But I cannot tell you how many times I went, only to have to go away again. At last I did what I ought to have done at first, inquired into the cause, when I found that the defendant was a creditor of the serishtadar, or head clerk of the Court, who owed him a thousand rupees.

"I then applied, and had the suit brought into the Judge's court. But here I was destined to no better success. I engaged a native advocate, to whom I entrusted all the papers in the case. This did not improve matters: the defendant easily bought him over, and he lost all the papers, and I had the trouble and expense of getting fresh ones. At last the case came on for settlement of the issues, when what was my astonishment, to hear the pleader for the defendant suggest in the first issue, whether there was any door at all. I lost my temper and got very angry, but I found sure enough that their first plea was that there was no door at all. It reminded me of the American case

about the kettle, which the plaintiff alleged the defendant had borrowed, and returned without the spout. 'I shall prove,' said the counsel to the jury, 'that in the first place the kettle had no spout when it was borrowed; secondly, that it never was borrowed; and thirdly, that there was no kettle at all.'

"As soon as the day's business was over, I got into my buggy and drove down to look at the premises, and to see what the man could possibly mean by saying there was no door, when I had seen it scores of times. To my utter astonishment, I found he was correct; there was no door, and to all appearance there never had been one. No vestige of such a thing could be traced anywhere on the wall, so adroitly had it been built in, and the place concealed. I got in through one of the windows, and examined the inside wall, and found that that exhibited no more trace than the outside wall. I asked the neighbours if they could not swear there had been a door there, but they all denied ever having seen one. I went to the kotwal, and he said he had already promised the defendant to depose to the fact that the house never had had a door. In despair, I went to the man from whom I purchased the house, and he calmly assured me that this was the very reason why he had sold the house, because it had no door, and he had found residence there inconvenient

in consequence. That was the state of my case, and now tell me, for you have had some experience in these matters, what do you think of it?"

"Well, OLD MORTALITY," said I, "your chance of a decree was not worth much. Why didn't you get proper legal assistance in the first instance? Why didn't you get a barrister from Calcutta?"

"I did try, but I found the expense too great. My attorneys in reply to my letter asking what Mr. Small Talk would take up the case for, intimated it would be necessary for me to pay the fees beforehand—that of course I knew, but when they said that Small Talk would not come for less than ten thousand rupees down, and a thousand rupees an hour from the time he left till the time he returned to Calcutta, I thought it was too much. So I determined to be my own lawyer, and set to work to study the decisions of the Sudder Dewany from 1857, and I conducted the case myself. I have brought you the judgment, which you can read.

"*In the Court of the Civil Judge of Budgepore.*

OLD MORTALITY *versus* SALIG RAM.

Claim 3,000 Rupees.

JUDGMENT.

"The plaintiff in this suit purchased a house in the city of Budgepore a short time ago. He

claims 3000 Rs. damages from defendant, who, he alleges, erected a brick wall two feet from the door of that house, thereby destroying its utility as a place of residence, and in fact ruining the property. The main difficulty in this case is the fact, that the existence of the door, the approach to which is said to have been blocked up by the erection of the brick wall by the defendant, is disputed by the defendant. The evidence on this point is all in favour of the defendant. But I find certain admissions in the evidence of some of the defendant's witnesses, that go far to shake the confidence I might otherwise feel in a train of testimony so well substantiated by witnesses of the most respectable character. The principal witness for defendant, Jootharam, who built the house, and from whom the plaintiff purchased it, declares he built it without a door. This in itself is a suspicious circumstance. For of what use could a house be without a door? The witness himself says his object in having no doorway was to keep the cats out; but it is in evidence that he built a window, and it seems inconsistent to build a house for human habitation with a window, by which the ingress and egress of cats could be accomplished, and at the same time to put no doorway, by which the ingress and egress of its occupants could be effected. Had there been neither a window nor a door, then the original

design of the builder would not have been inconsistent with the course he alleges he pursued, because the Court cannot but see that the object of keeping cats out would be very effectually accomplished by the construction of a house without doors or windows. But to erect a dwelling-house with a window, by which the cats might undoubtedly effect an entrance, and yet to put no door, by which the occupants of the house could go in and out, seems to the Court so extraordinary an act, that the assertion of its commission must be received with great caution.

"The city kotwal, a man of undoubted veracity and most respectable character, deposes that the house never had a door; yet he admitted that he knew certain parties who resided in it. When asked how, in the absence of any door, these parties went in and out of the house, he replied, that they were not in the habit of going in and out.

"The Ameens appointed by the Court to examine the premises, report that there clearly never was any doorway, but at the same time they put in a list of articles that they found inside, among which I observe a cot included, which could not by any possibility have been taken in through the window.

"Although, therefore, the testimony of the defendant's witnesses is absolutely unimpeach-

able, the whole of them being men of the highest respectability and undoubted veracity, yet I find myself totally unable to adopt their conclusion, in face of the very strong presumption raised on the other side, viz., the presumption of the existence of a door.

"As the defendant has rested his whole case upon the denial of the existence of the door, and does not attempt to show that he did not build the brick wall in front of it, and so block it up, I find both the first issues for the plaintiff.

"The question of damages remains only to be considered.

"It is quite clear to this Court, that, whatever may have been the previous condition of the house, its present condition is not such as to allow of occupation by any tenants but such as can find ingress and egress through the window. Such tenants would no doubt principally, if not wholly, belong to the class the exclusion of which was contemplated by the witness Joothram, when he constructed the edifice. There are no data before the Court by which the Court can derive any accurate idea of the probable rental derivable from that class of tenants.

"The value, however, of the bricks and material used to construct the wall erected by the defendant, is in evidence, and the Court considers that it will meet the equity of the case by awarding a decree to the plaintiff of the amount

expended by defendant in constructing this wall, or 200 rupees. This decree will carry with it the costs of the suit."

(Signed) BASIL MOOLTAWEE,

Judge.

CHRONICLE VIII.

THE VISIT OF OUR SPIN.

CHRONICLE VIII.

THE VISIT OF OUR SPIN.

Oh, it was a great day for Budgepore when—I must really be excused for using that horribly vulgar Anglo-Indianism—the spin arrived. *The* spin, did I say? Yes, for you know there had not been one at Budgepore within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant! I say, before she arrived, the excitement was at boiling pitch. We heard of her expected arrival a month before she came. A month's notice was rather a short notice, and when viewed in connection with some circumstances that transpired subsequently, which I shall detail all in good time, I may say it was a suspicious circumstance. Because, you see, in those days—I am speaking of 1840—you generally heard of the expected arrival of so important a personage as "a spin" at least three months, sometimes six, before the event happened. For before the young ladies left England it was always known to their friends

to whom they were coming, when they might be expected, and they, of course, would naturally enough spread the report abroad. So that, in fact, Miss Smith or Miss Jones was expected at Muddlepore, or Hotchpotchabad, even while the interesting girls were engaged in shopping in London, selecting silks and muslins, laces and cambrics that were destined to commit havoc among the hearts of the male dwellers at Muddlepore and Hotchpotchabad.

"I say, old fellow, have you heard the news," said young Anderson, coming into my room one morning.

"No, what news?"

"She's to be here to-morrow."

"You don't say so! Who told you?"

"Mrs. Gregory—I've just met her."

One word about Mrs. Gregory and her worthy husband. The Gregorys were the jolliest couple I ever knew. They had married early in life; they seemed to have no cares, enjoyed good health, and never dreamt of going to the hills. At the time I speak of he had reached the rank of Major, and was enjoying the *otium cum dignitate* of that very easy berth, a Major in a native regiment commanded by a Lieutenant-Colonel, with little to do but to draw his 750 Rs. a month.

Mrs. Gregory, though a good many summers, and those Indian summers, had passed over her head, had lost none of the freshness and vivacity

of youth. She was acutely sensitive to the ridiculous, and no one understood or appreciated a joke better than she. Perhaps, for a lady, she was a little too fond of jokes, even practical ones. I knew her so well that I could always tell by a peculiar twinkle in the corner of her eyes, when she was up to mischief, and took care to be prepared accordingly.

The next evening Robertson came in as a small party were sitting down to dinner at my house, in a state of great excitement.

"I've seen her!" he said.

"Have you!" we all cried simultaneously Not that I individually felt much interest in this young person, but I did not like to show indifference to a matter in which they were all so much concerned.

"What is she like?" two or three asked at once.

"Is she tall or short?"

"What colour eyes and hair?"

"How does she dress?"

"Where did you see her?"

"What about her paces?"

These and several more queries of a like kind were hurled at poor Robertson before he had had time to throw his cap on a chair, and draw another chair to the table.

Nobody had asked her name—that was left for me to do.

"Sophy Wilkins."

"Now I'll describe her to you," said Robertson when he had finished his soup, "and answer all your questions at once. Our new spin—she won't be a spin long, I take it—is the most angelic creature I ever set eyes upon. Her hair—well, I dont know what colour her hair is—I scarcely saw it; in fact I think she has very little, but what there is, is light; her eyes are blue, her figure perfection, and her manners"——

A shout of laughter at this crisis drowned Robertson's voice, and prevented us from hearing the remainder of the description he was prepared to give. He blushed up to the eyes, and looked ashamed of himself. It was clear he was already head and ears over in love, and his friends had no delicacy in telling him so.

Sophy Wilkins was very pretty, there is no doubt, and Robertson's enthusiastic description of her did her but justice. I noticed that mischievous twinkling in the corner of Mrs. Gregory's eye when she introduced me to her pretty niece, and I said to myself, "You are up to some mischief, I know; perhaps you are anticipating the pleasure of seeing OLD MORTALITY in love."

Those were gay days for Budgepore. Budgepore hardly knew itself. It was the cold weather, and we had pic-nics, and archery parties and riding parties, balls and amusements without

end. We mustered altogether about ten ladies, all of them, of course, except the last arrival, married. It is hardly necessary to say all the young men lost their hearts, and all were ready to propose to Sophy after she had been there a week. The first that did propose, and was accepted, too, was poor Robertson. The older officers shook their heads at the imprudence of such a match. I went so far as to remonstrate with my old friend Mrs. Gregory, for Robertson was only a lieutenant; but she merely gave me another malicious twinkle, and said it would be all right. I took her to mean that young ladies were proverbially fickle, and that the match would be broken off, or that Sophy Wilkins was a rich banker's or merchant's daughter, and an heiress.

At first all went well, Robertson was seen out riding with his affianced bride for two evenings, and they rode together round and round the band-stand. After a few days there began to prevail sinister reports about the engagement. Sophy was observed to bestow her favours upon Sharpe, the adjutant, and poor Robertson looked more and more crest-fallen.

I don't know how these things are managed, never having had any experience of the world of matrimony myself, but I do know this, that Sophy Wilkins managed to jilt Robertson and took Sharpe into favour.

Of course everybody observed it, and Robertson got jealous; still, he could not believe that his goddess was faithless, and hoped on, though his rival daily grew in favour.

One evening we had a dance at the mess. It was the Thursday evening, the week after her arrival. I had just concluded a set of quadrilles with Sophy Wilkins, when she slightly pressed my arm with her taper fingers, and asked me to take her outside. She seemed suddenly depressed, excited, pained at something. Was she ill? No. As I turned to lead her out, I saw the cause of her discomposure. There stood her adorer (number one) the picture of sadness and grief, leaning with his arms folded against the door, and looking most woe-begone. Only that week she had confessed to him her love, had sworn to be true and faithful, and now she had been flirting all the evening with this fellow and that, and especially with Sharpe, the adjutant.

When we reached the garden, Miss Sophy seated herself upon a rustic bench underneath a magnificent peepul tree, whose leaves and branches the rays of the full moon were bathing in a flood of silvery light. She motioned me to seat myself beside her, which I did, at least as well as I could, for there was only a very little bit of the seat left just at the end, four-fifths of it being enveloped with the

folds of her snowy tarlatan dress, a mass of dazzling drapery that shone in the moonlight, the emblem of virgin purity. I did not venture to remove it, much less to sit upon it, but placed myself respectfully at the edge of the seat, in a position that caused me very shortly to suffer from cramp.

I had begun to take a considerable interest in this young girl. She seemed at times so artless and innocent, one trembled to think of her being exposed to the temptations of the world, and at other times her genius would flash out in remarks and suggestions, that in one less child-like would have seemed like being *very* wide awake. "Does she intend, I wonder," said I, mentally addressing myself, "to try it on with me—me—OLD MORTALITY? no, hardly that!"

"Are you unwell, Miss Wilkins?" said I, in my blandest tone, and most sympathetic manner.

She sighed.

"Worse and worse," thought I. "I hope she won't cry."

An awkward silence ensued—a very awkward one. What was I to do? Did she expect me to take her hand, and press it with gentle sympathy? Yes; perhaps that will be the best way.

I took it. "My dear Miss Wilkins," said I, at the same moment, "Do tell me if you are unwell; is there any great grief weighing upon

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your spirits, any sorrow you are longing for sympathy under? I am an old man, old enough to be your father; confide in me, if I can comfort you, I will; if I can advise you, you shall have my advice; if——"

"Yes, Old Mortality," she said in her sweetest tones. She had a sweet voice, and it seemed somehow in harmony with the soft evening air, and the bright moonlight.

"Yes; I have a deep sorrow—poor Gerard!" —(that was Robertson,) "his reproachful yet tender look cut me to my heart—how could I have been so cruel!"

And she put the loveliest cambric handkerchief, bordered with the loveliest Maltese lace to her eyes. I knew she was weeping.

"Is it the case then? but excuse me, I have no right to ask the question; Gerard Robertson is jilted, is he? and Sharpe is the happy man?"

I had no sooner said the words, somehow, than I felt as if I had been a brute; and I wished the earth would open, or, what was much more likely of attainment, that a large cobra would open his mouth and swallow me up.

But she did not turn on me and spurn me. She withdrew her handkerchief from her eyes and raised those glorious blue orbs, still glistening with pearly drops, upwards through the branches of the noble old tree, to where the

stars in heaven were sleeping in the calm moonlight.

Then she turned them full upon me, and said,

"You have saved me, oh, so much pain. You have expressed, curtly, it is true, but with manly vigour, what I was trying in vain to get my foolish woman's heart to say to you. Yes, Gerard and I must part. Our souls are not in unison. Were we to marry, and he has only lieutenant's pay, two hundred and fifty-six—ten and a company, we should be unhappy for life. I feel that I have wronged him, but do you think you could do me a favour?"

I am quite certain that if she had asked me to climb up to the top of the tree, I should have attempted it.

"I will do anything I can for you, Miss Wilkins," I said.

"Oh, thank you—thank you a thousand times. This is what I want you to do; to go and break it to Mr. Robertson—in the gentlest way you can. He is here to-night, go now and tell him."

I went upon the unpleasant duty, and performed it like a man, and returned to the garden seat to receive her thanks. She asked me if he seemed to feel it very much. I said yes, I thought he did.

She signified her intention of returning to

the ball room. Obedient as a slave, I rose and offered her my arm.

When we returned, Robertson was gone. Sharpe was, however, there, and the next minute she was whirling round with him in the dance, his arm clasping her waist and her head reclining gracefully upon his shoulder.

Next day it was given out that she was engaged to him, and they rode together side by side round the band-stand.

Sharpe was a pattern adjutant, the man of most influence in the regiment next to the native doctor. He was a well-made man, of about six feet one, with well-developed chest and muscular limbs. He had a great idea of the dignity of his office, and used to wig the junior officers as if he were commandant. He was generally to be seen, except, of course, upon parade, with a service letter in his hand, to the contents of which he would ever and anon refer, even while in conversation, as if the whole business of the administration rested upon him, and he had no leisure to attend to matters of minor import. That he should have cut out Robertson was not, we thought, to be wondered at, so much as that he should have condescended to accept the post of suitor No. 2.

As soon as the engagement was complete, he began, recklessly almost, to prepare his house

for the reception of his bride. The verandah was thronged with a crowd of carpenters and work-people; he began to have his rooms painted, at least coloured, and bought a silver tea pot and a pony carriage.

I left Budgepore for a few days about this time, and when I came back I drove over to the colonel's. Finding Mrs. Sungeen alone in the drawing-room, I entered into conversation with her, as I was curious to hear the news. And she did not keep me long waiting. Of course Sophy Wilkins was the theme.

"What a girl that is to be sure!" she said. "I never knew a girl behave so shamefully as she has done, upon my word I never did."

I supposed she was alluding to her having jilted Robertson, and said,—

"Yes, but I have always understood it was a privilege ladies were allowed to indulge in. Robertson was foolish to make so much of it. I'm sure if it had been I, I wouldn't have cried my eyes out; stuff and nonsense, all women are alike, and—"

"All good for nothing you think, Old Mortality, I know. No, it was not Robertson I was thinking of, but there's poor Sharpe, he's spent already three thousand rupees in furniture and horses."

Mrs. Sungeen, you observe, used to call the officers of her husband's regiment by their sur-

names. It was a common practice in those days, I don't know whether it is so now.

"Well," I replied, "it is not too much. Any man who marries such a pretty girl as Sophy Wilkins ought to have his house nicely furnished. If she was my wife she should have every thing of the best."

I was pretty safe in saying that, and chuckled inwardly while I said it.

"Everything of the best! Then it seems you haven't heard."

"What?"

"Why, the last?"

"Pray do not drive me to distraction, Mrs. Sungeen," said I, irritated beyond endurance. "I really like this girl,—that is—I—take an interest in her—a fatherly interest you know—tell me, has anything happened to interfere with her engagement with Sharpe?"

"Anything happened!—Yes, a little. She's engaged to Cocker, that stuck up young assistant civilian, you know."

Now Cocker was not at all particularly "stuck up." He was a very good fellow. But Mrs. Sungeen hated a civilian as a wild bull does a piece of red cloth. In her eyes all the service were "stuck up."

I was so astonished at this communication that I actually jumped off my chair.

"Lawk a mercy! Old Mortality, you needn't

be so much astonished at that. It's just what I expected. I *am* thankful of one thing, at any rate, that that girl does not come into the regiment."

"But how did all this come about, do tell me, I am dying to know."

"Well, it was easy enough coming about. Young Cocker saw her at the band, and met her two or three times, proposed, and was accepted, and what do you think the heartless creature said? I spoke to her, I was determined I would speak to her, she shouldn't break the heart of all my boys this way, without my having a word with her. So I told her I thought she ought to have known her own mind better than to break poor Robertson's heart (the poor boy has hardly smiled since; he has been over to dinner every day, and I do my best to cheer him, but it's no use), and there's Sharpe, he has not only broken his heart, but he's furnished his house, which is a much more serious thing. Now what do you think she said; 'You don't know, Mrs. Sungeen, how I hate myself for the way I have behaved to these young men; but a poor helpless orphan as I am, must take care of herself. Now Mr. Cocker is a civilian, and a civilian is £300 a year, dead or alive.' That's what she said, the very words—'dead or alive.'"

"Upon my word, she is a cool young lady."

But, do you know, I rather respect her for having the honesty to speak out her sentiments; and how does Sharpe bear it?"

"Oh, very well. He has sold all the furniture and carpets and the silver teapot to Mr. Cocker, who has taken them off his hands at cost price."

Cocker's engagement lasted long enough for Miss Sophy to lame both his horses, and for him to buy a new Arab for 1200 rupees on the strength of a loan from the Agra Bank, which he sent up with a bran new saddle and bridle one morning to Gregory's house. After a short time, Molyneux, the Collector, who had been out in the district, returned to the station, and Cocker rather proudly introduced him to his affianced bride the first evening after his return.

There was something rather peculiar, I thought, about Miss Sophy. She never appeared except in the evening. If you called at the Gregorys' house, you did not see her, though on one or two occasions, after keeping them waiting a long time, she had vouchsafed to gladden the eyes of her lovers with her presence. She never went to church. Was she a dissenter, I used to wonder? She used to enjoy dancing and riding, and the pleasure of her society in these two pastimes was the only one she ever allowed her lovers to enjoy.

The day following that of Molyneux's introduction, Cocker had orders to go out into the district and complete the work that his superior had left uncompleted. He went reluctantly enough, poor fellow. Mrs. Sungeen said she knew very well how it would be. But, then, it is very easy to be wise after the event. How it came about I do not know, but within a week of Cocker's departure Sophy had engaged herself to Molyneux. Cocker was very angry at first, and insisted on calling him out, but it ended in Molyneux paying the costs, that is, taking the furniture and the carpets and the silver teapot off Cocker's hands. They used to say at Budgepore that it was quite a common thing to see the carts laden with the furniture going from house to house, indicating the direction in which Sophy's affections had been transferred. But this was an exaggeration, because they, I mean the chairs, tables, &c., &c. had only been moved twice—once from Sharpe's to Cocker's, and once from Cocker's to Molyneux's.

Molyneux was now the happy man. And no sooner did it become noised abroad in the district that the Collector Sahib was about to take a wife, a wife with whom, moreover, he was desperately in love, than the affectionate and attached inhabitants of the villages, zemindaries and jageers round about Budgepore came

in to pay their respects to the Collector's wife that was to be, bringing with them or sending before them such little offerings in the shape of fat kine, goats, baskets of fruit and vegetables and other presents of a more costly nature, that Mrs. Gregory was put to her wit's end to know what to do with them.

Molyneux, in addition to *the* furniture, sent down a large order to Shearwood to the amount of 5,000 rupees, for spring chairs, sofas, foot-stools, a cheval glass, dressing tables, &c.

Alas for human hopes and human wishes! We were playing pool in the billiard room, a lot of us, one afternoon, Molyneux being of the party, when a pink-coloured envelope was put into his hands. He took it into the verandah on pretence to get more light to read it by. Artful man. *I* saw him. His back was no sooner turned and his face, as he thought, out of sight, than he pressed the seal, I mean the part where the seal ought to have been, to his lips, and then he opened it. Ah, he should have opened it first! And, reader, do you learn a lesson from this. Never kiss a letter till you have mastered its contents.

The note was as follows :—

My dear Mr. Molyneux,—

Before this reaches you we shall have parted for ever. Do not ask me why. Do not seek to follow me. Do not rend still further

my broken heart by forcing me to explanations, painful because they will so forcibly recall the sweetness of the past, now fled from me—from us, for ever. Duty more binding than the vows of an affianced wife calls me elsewhere. Adieu. I am gone.

Yours, heart-broken,
SOPHIA WILKINS.

Molyneux turned deadly pale. He threw down the billiard cue, snatched his coat and rushed out of the house, jumped into his buggy, and drove off towards Gregory's. I followed, for I feared some catastrophe.

But what was the good of our going except to be laughed at by Mrs. Gregory? I do not mean that she openly ridiculed Molyneux's sorrow, but I saw by the twinkle of her eye that there was no real sympathy in her bosom.

Sophy Wilkins' sojourn among us and her sudden departure had had something the same effect upon the secluded little circle of Budgeporeans that the failure of a bank would have had. Robertson was the only one of the victims to the fair enslaver who escaped without both an empty pocket and a broken heart. And in consequence having only one sorrow to mourn over, he felt it all the more deeply. Molyneux soon got married, and Shearwood's consignment came up just in time. Cocker, who

had manfully struggled against debt, and with success, hitherto, now being below the water, gave up the attempt to keep any longer above, and eventually became very heavily involved.

* * * * * *

About a couple of months after this, I passed through Umballa on my way to the hills. The —— Lancers were quartered there, and I put up with one of them on my way through. It happened there was a theatrical performance by the officers the evening of my halt, and as I was to start for Kalka at twelve at night, I willingly consented to accompany my friend to the regimental theatre. One of the pieces played was the "Lady of Lyons." What was my pleasurable surprise to see the principal part in the piece taken by my old, though still young friend, Sophy Wilkins, or at least a young lady as like her as one pea to another. There were the same rosy cheeks, the same blue eyes, the same clear complexion, the same short hair, the same grace of manner, that had charmed us all at Budgepore.

Walking home with my friend Quartly and his chum Howard, they asked me how I liked the play?

"Very much," said I; "and it adds to the charm of a thing of this kind, where you get ladies to take a part. I wish it was more generally the custom in India, as it might be in

well-managed amateur theatres, where the actors are all gentlemen, and belong to one corps."

My sage remarks, to my surprise, were greeted with shouts of laughter from my two companions.

"What are you laughing at?" said I.

Quartly was about to say something, when Howard nudged him, and said in an under tone, but not so softly but that I could hear,

"Don't tell him."

We had by that time reached the compound gate, and I found my palkee and bearers ready waiting. I was busy adjusting the contents of the palkee when my two friends passed me to enter the house. Just at that moment I heard a pony's hoofs clattering along the road, and by the time I had finished my arrangements and had got inside the house, where supper was laid out, the pony had brought its rider to the door.

"Come in, Chaffers," said Quartly, going out to the verandah. "Come and have some supper."

"Well, I don't mind if I do. Those petticoats are devilish hot."

"Oh, is that Chaffers?" said Howard, putting down a bottle of champagne he was just manipulating, and running out.

"Come in!—there's one of your Budgepore friends here."

The estimable Chaffers, whoever he was, had just reached the doorway, when Howard uttered the last few words. He turned like a flash of lightning, with a little scream you might have taken for a woman's just before a fit of hysteria, leaped on his pony, and in an instant almost, judging from the sound of the animal's hoofs, was out of the compound, galloping down the road at least ten miles an hour.

* * * * *

When I returned to Budgepore in November, the cold weather had set in. There was a large dinner party shortly after my return, and as usual, every one in the station was present. Now, thought I, I will pay her out.

It was during the awkward period, before dinner was announced. There happened to be a dead silence. No one spoke a word. I went and stood in the centre of the group, and addressed myself pointedly to Mrs. Gregory, who was at a little distance from me, so necessarily everyone in the room heard what passed. This was just what I wanted.

"I had a very pleasant visit at Umballa on my way through, Mrs. Gregory," said I.

"Indeed!"

Everybody's attention was now attracted to us, not because they were particularly interested in my visit to Umballa, but simply because no one had anything else to attend to.

"Yes," said I. "I had the pleasure of witnessing a very pretty wedding."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Gregory, not exactly understanding why I addressed such a pointless observation to her.

"And pray whose was it?"

"Your niece's, Sophy Wilkins, did you not know, she—is married?"

Mrs. Gregory's eye did not twinkle with mischief at me then. It implored pity, it prayed silence—it besought me for mercy.

I felt like an executioner—at least like what I suppose an executioner feels just as he adjusts the rope round the victim's neck, and thinks of the majesty of public justice.

"Dinner is ready," said the old khansama in Hindustani, and this saved her.

Mrs. Gregory is my friend for life. I can make her do my slightest bidding, and she dare not thwart my will, for I have something over her *in terrorem*. I don't know how her husband likes the relative position in which we stand, but then I never intend to ask him.

CHRONICLE IX.

THE REMOUNTS.

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CHAPTER I.

A FAUX PAS.

The events which I purpose briefly to chronicle in the following pages occurred at Budgepore in the year 18—.

I have already taken the measure of the society at Budgepore. There were, however, some important characters whom I have not yet introduced to my readers. When I say "characters" in the plural, I speak, perhaps, scarcely with grammatical correctness, for I intend to designate the famous firm of Cork, Screw & Co. That is to say, the Budgepore branch of that illustrious firm was represented by one individual only, and that was Screw

Septimus, the seventh son of old Screw, and the nephew of the gentleman who, as one of the principal shareholders in the firm, lent his name to the partnership. One of these days, perhaps, I may chronicle the history, the rise, progress, and decay and ultimate fate of this enterprising house, how, beginning from small things they grew to great, then having reached the zenith of prosperity and fame, they became transmogrified into a joint-stock company under the title of the "All India Europe Goods Association," how the shareholders fell out, and went to law, and the whilom prosperous concern flowed gently into the hands of a liquidator, who liquidated so successfully that after two short years there was nothing left for the shareholders to fight about any more, which, as you will easily see, was the most fortunate termination that the affair could possibly take, inasmuch as the shareholders were after that always contented and good friends, whereas before they had always been quarrelling.

The firm of Cork, Screw & Co. has elsewhere been described by an abler pen than mine, I have, therefore, no intention of dwelling upon it here. I merely allude to it, as their premises happened to be the place where I one morning picked up a piece of news.

There was at that time residing at Budgepore, Colonel Chugli, who having reached that

stage of promotion where there was nothing left for him to get but a brigade command, took up his abode at Budgepore during the cold weather months, and always went to Simla in the hot. He had one of the best houses and nicest gardens in the place. He did not entertain, but he gave, or rather I should, perhaps, say he held, for people do not "give" but they "hold," prayer meetings. He was a dissenter, and belonged, I believe, to one of the one hundred and seventeen sects of Independents. I do not know which, and I rather doubt if he did. However, that is nothing to the purpose. But he was always to be found at Screw's in the morning, meandering, or as it is less poetically, but more forcibly expressed, "mooning" about the shop, not buying any thing in particular, but he went there, I fancy, as a great many others did, as a sort of morning lounge where you might hear all the news, *id est* the scandal and tittle tattle of the day before, which, after dripping through the minor channels of the coffee shops, formed itself into a pretty large stream and ran merrily through the premises of the great dealer in "Europe goods."

The "coffee shop" is an essentially Indian institution, and a very estimable institution it is in its way. The habit of early rising, and of taking out of door exercise before the sun

gets hot, necessitates a meal before the usual breakfast hour. And so the custom has grown up among us of meeting at one another's houses in the morning after parade is over, or on our return from our morning walk or ride. In a shady nook in the garden, or in a summer-house, these social gatherings take place, where from half an hour to an hour, or even longer, those who are very intimate meet round the breakfast table, for so it must be called, discuss the news, open their letters or newspapers, talk gossip, and, when there are ladies, usually practice archery, or play perhaps, a game of croquet.

I once asked young Screw if Colonel Chugli made many purchases at his shop. I don't know what business I had to ask the question. But one does get into a bad habit of thinking and talking a great deal about one's neighbour's private affairs in India, you know. I suppose the reason is that peoples' "private affairs" are so often dragged before the public in the Commander-in-Chief's orders, that curiosity becomes involuntarily excited. And I had seen the Colonel so constantly at the shop that I imagined he spent a share of his income, proportionate to his time, there.

"Oh no, Sir," said young Screw, in reply to my question, "he never bought anything but once, and that was at auction."

"Indeed! and what did he buy then?"

"Why, he made rather an unfortunate purchase, at least, it was a mistake: but the Colonel behaved like a gentleman, and there was no disturbance about it. He bought a gross of green gooseberries."

"A gross of green gooseberries!" said I, much astonished.

"Yes, Sir, and he was taken very ill after it. It happened in this way, you see, Sir. We had an auction, selling off all the old stock to make room for the new. Among the old stock there was a gross of green gooseberry tart fruit. We put them up at two annas a bottle, and the Colonel thinking he was bidding for a bottle only, bought the whole stock at five annas a bottle. Wasn't he mad when they were sent home! He had them put out in a row in the verandah, like a regiment of soldiers, and walked up and down in front of them for full half an hour, as if he was inspecting them on parade."

"I wonder he did not send them back, you would not do me in that way, I can tell you."

"Well, sir, if he had sent them back we would have taken them back, of course, upon the mistake being explained. But the Colonel, he made a good thing of it."

"How did he manage that?"

"Well, sir, it is a curious story rather. But

the way was this; about nine months before this occurred there was a chemical examiner appointed to Government. His business is, when it is supposed any body has been poisoned, to get the insides of the persons that have been poisoned and analyse them."

"Analyse them?"

"Yes, analyse them, to see what they died of. A day after the appointment appeared in orders, Mr. Gerkin, Joint Magistrate of Ahmedpore, reported that seven children and the father and mother had all died under suspicious circumstances. The Civil Surgeon had made a *post mortem* examination, and all the insides were readily packed in separate parcels to send to the chemical examiner, Dr. Machnonochy, the same that had the harness depot at Cawnpore. Well, Mr. Gerkin wrote an official letter to the Magistrate who wrote an official letter to the Commissioner, who wrote another to the Deputy Inspector-General of the division, who sent it back, recommending the Commissioner to apply to the Public Works Department for bottles or jars to put the insides into. The Public Works Department returned the application, and said the Commissariat was the proper quarter to apply to. So the Commissioner wrote to the Commissariat officer, who referred him to the Deputy Commissary of Ordnance. The Deputy Commissary of Ordnance sent the letter on to

the Deputy Inspector, who was travelling then upon a tour of inspection, but the letter reached him after about three weeks, and he wrote to say that he thought the department could not interfere without orders from Calcutta; but he thought either the Clothing Agency or the Gun Carriage Agency at Futteghur would be able to do what was necessary. Meantime the Civil Surgeon at Ahmedpore was almost wild with vexation and annoyance. He had been obliged to move out into tents with his family and abandon the house, and, indeed, not only was the house abandoned, but no one could drive along the road past the gate. For, you see, sir, the articles having been taken out and packed up under suspicious circumstances, couldn't be buried without being examined. The Doctor, he wanted to bury them, but the Joint Magistrate said if he did, he would be tried at the High Court on suspicion of having poisoned the parties himself. So he was determined to do something, and he addressed the Lieutenant-Governor on the subject. The Lieutenant-Governor sent the letter back; with a wig saying, he was to address him through the proper channel, his immediate superior. So he wrote to the Deputy Inspector and begged that his letter might be forwarded to the Inspector-General. When the Inspector-General found what was wanted, he addressed the Government,

recommending them to purchase in the bazaar a number of empty tart fruit bottles,* and distribute them about the country among the different civil officers. So Colonel Chugli heard of it, and when tenders were called for, his was the lowest and largest. For no one else had a gross of empty tart fruit bottles to spare, and he sold them at a profit of six pie on each bottle. And that is the history of the tart fruit bottles."

I have rather digressed, however, from the main point of my chronicle, which was to relate what Colonel Chugli told me that morning.

He asked me if I had heard the news. I said no. Then he told me, at least I gathered it from his observation that young Twemlow of the Stud had got into trouble.

The Budgepore Stud, I must tell you, was an institution of the class its name intimates. It was situated about twenty miles from the station. It was a favourite appointment, that of Superintendent of the Stud, and Twemlow had been considered very lucky to get it.

I must confess when I heard this news, I was a little taken aback and conscience-stricken. I was taken aback, because I could not conceive how Twemlow, who I knew was the soul of honour and as upright a man as ever breathed,

* Official instructions have recently been issued by the head of the Medical Department for the employment of empty tart fruit bottles for these purposes.

could have possibly done anything that was wrong. I was conscience-stricken, because the day he got intimation of the appointment he happened to be passing through Budgepore and putting up with me. If it had not been for my persuading him I do not think he would have taken it. Appointments in India are given away without the slightest regard to a recipient's fitness or unfitness for them. Twemlow's name was down in the Governor-General's list for the first staff appointment, and it happened to be a Stud appointment, and he got it.

"Do you know Old Mortality," he said, after telling me what the letter contained—the letter that had brought him the offer of the appointment—"I cannot possibly accept this offer. Its very kind of Tudor to offer it, but its deuced unlucky it was a Stud appointment that fell vacant."

"But why not," said I, "why not take it? You must not fly too high at first. It is a great catch for you to get away from your regiment at all. You are the last one that can get away, you know, for they have their full compliment of absentees. Besides, it is a very nice berth. You will be able to be married now, and it is a healthy place you live at, and a capital house and easy work, and very tolerable pay. Upon my word, Twemlow, I do think you are rather

hard to please. Why, bless my soul, when I was at your age"——

"Oh, stop that, please. There's nothing I hate more than to hear a man saying 'when I was your age,' as if every one that had not reached a certain age must be a fool. No, no, you misunderstand me. What I mean is, how can I have the face, the bare brazenfaced impudence to take an appointment in the Stud when I should not know a horse from a cow, except for the horns. I hate the very smell of a stable, and only get on the back of a horse when I am obliged. I'm perfectly and utterly ignorant of all and every duty connected with the Stud. The idea of my breeding horses, and looking after mares, and stallions, and oats and head stalls! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! and yet if I don't take this appointment I'm done for. I shall never get another such an offer, indeed I shall never get another offer at all, for Stubbs, you know, has been promised, and if he gets away from the regiment then I'm shelved, and my marriage must be put off and the devil to pay."

"Don't bother yourself my good fellow," said I; "take the appointment, and do your best. No man can do more. Ten to one, aye a hundred to one, you will find some old baboo who has been in the office for the last thirty years, who will show you all the office work;

and as for the horses and mares, why if I were you, I should leave them pretty much to themselves. Any way your assistant, who will probably be a man who lives in a stable and understands the thing thoroughly, he'll put you up to it all."

"But I shall look such a fool, talking about things I don't understand."

"Then why talk about them? can't you listen? Why, I've known men go through life with the reputation of being exceedingly clever and very deep, and yet they were dolts; only they had sense enough to keep their mouths shut, and society put them down for philosophers. Depend on it if you want people to be afraid of you, and to think you wise, you have only got to be always silent."

So Twemlow took the appointment, and was married on the strength of it.

I was determined to hear more of this, if possible, so I drove over to Mrs. Thwaites's house. Mrs. Thwaites was one of the gems of Budgepore. Her husband was at that time Civil Surgeon, and a very popular man he was, a good doctor, and a useful member of our little circle; always ready and willing to take a foremost part in any little piece of innocent gaiety, a dance or a picnic, or amateur theatrical performances got up *pro bono publico* for the good of our little commonwealth. Mrs. Thwaites,

who was the doctor's second wife, was some ten years younger than her husband. She was pretty and amiable, attractive without being a flirt; with all that charming grace of manner and liveliness of disposition, and at the same time an abundance of good sense, that makes such a woman in the little coteries of Anglo-Indian society all-powerful for good in the beneficial influence she exercises.

Her morning assemblies were extremely popular. She had a pretty little summer-house, and a very nicely-kept garden, with an archery ground; croquet in those days had not been discovered. The greatest attraction, however, to these charming little *réunions* were the grace and vivacity with which the hostess herself presided over them, and made the occasion a pleasant one for all her visitors.

Her appearance in the morning was enough to refresh the spirits of a dry old bachelor like myself, and make my memory wander back down the vista of past years, to the time when youth gilded the horizon of life, and I could not help thinking how different an aspect would that life have worn, if it had been enlivened all through its course with the constant presence and society of one so bright, and innocent, and fresh as the peerless creature that cheered, like a beam of sunshine in an English house, the pathway of our friend Thwaites. Lucky fellow!

But you did not feel envious or jealous of him, he had such a good heart, and was so devoted to his pretty lovely wife; and she was so fond of him!

Like a flower freshened with the early dew, she used to appear in the morning, with the hue of health upon her cheek, even in that climate, clad all in white, pure and spotless as her own soul, and perform all the little duties of her homely hospitality with as much innate grace and such winning ways, that half an hour spent in her society in the morning, seemed to give a pleasant, healthy tone to your spirits all the day.

The Thwaiteses did not entertain largely; his income would not allow it, for he had a young, rising family. But Mrs. Thwaites was immensely popular, for all that; and, although they did not gather nightly a large assemblage round their mahogany, nor give their guests, when they did entertain great feasts, yet you were always sure to meet at Mrs. Thwaites's, at the hour when it was known she received visitors, pretty well everyone in Budgepore who was not kept away by duty from her charming circle.

One more trait in Mrs. Thwaites's character and I close my panegyric, and that was, that you never by any chance saw those beautifully chiselled rosy lips open to emit a single ill-natured remark, nor a word of scandal. That scandal was talked at her morning breakfast

parties was a necessity, for did she not live and breathe at Budgepore? And was not Budgepore an Indian station? and did not everybody in Budgepore almost meet at Mrs. Thwaites's in the morning? But, though scandal was talked there, as indeed how could it not be? it was a sort of contraband. And whereas at other ladies' houses, and at other gatherings, it formed the staple of conversation, here the little choice morsels of tittle tattle were repeated or invented in almost an under-tone, and at odd times, between neighbours who sat close enough together to talk to one another without addressing themselves to the general public. When any scandalous story was repeated to her, or was mentioned in such a way that it would be affectation to pretend to ignore it, or make believe she did not hear it, she would always turn it off, or draw out the sting in her own pretty way, just as she performed all the simplest and most ordinary commonplace actions of daily life. Men adored her, women envied, though they could not help loving, while they wished they could imitate her, and with it all, she never, as far as I knew, and I did know most things that went on at Budgepore,—as far as I knew she never gave her husband cause for one instant to be jealous.

I knew I should be sure to hear all there was to hear at Mrs. Thwaites's, because I knew I

should meet Mrs. Cameltrunk there, and Mrs. Mountjoy, and Mrs. James, and Miss Graham, besides a whole host of bachelors—everybody; in fact the world of Budgepore; what need I say more? So to Mrs. Thwaites's I went.

"Oh, have you heard the news?" said Mrs. Mountjoy, as I took the only vacant chair by her side.

"What news?" said I.

"Oh, about young Twemlow at the stud, such a shocking thing; and his young wife too!"

"Yes, indeed! I pity her," said I, "if anything has happened to her husband, they are so devoted to one another, and she, poor girl! so little able to battle with the world!"

"I don't see that she is to be pitied so much as all that. I do pity her, of course, as I have a woman's heart. But I cannot say I see her great beauty; and after all, if one does marry a swindler——"

"Mary, what's that you're talking about?" said Mountjoy, with his mouth full of muffin.

"Not about you, George."

"No, I should hope not, by gad. You ladies make use of strong words sometimes. Twemlow's as honest a fellow as ever breathed."

"Amen to that," said I, hoping that I should

hear something by-and-by to put me on the right track.

"Honest, you may call it," said Cameltrunk, who was the Executive Commissariat officer at Budgepore, "I dont call it honest. Though what the fellow can have been about I can't imagine. But it is just these things that give the service such a bad name. I say a black sheep should be marked and turned out of the flock, and every white sheep who does not want to be blackened too should help to turn him out."

"Even so," said I, "let every one try and be the first to cast the first stone."

"Stone, yes, stone him. I wish the old Jewish practice was in vogue in these days. It was a right good custom, that. Society protected itself by destroying the man that turned against it. Every member of the community that was wronged had a hand in the punishment, and so it ought to be now."

"Its your turn, Mrs. Cameltrunk," said Mrs. Thwaites, coming up just at this moment from shooting, with her bow in her hand. "I have got two reds, and a bull's eye, see if you can beat that. How do you do, Mr. Old Mortality," she added, holding out her hand to me. She had heard what we were talking about, but she did not choose to notice. Mrs. James came with her, and I shook hands with her just after-

wards. She also had overhead our conversation, for the two ladies had arrived at the spot where we were seated a second or two before, and we had not noticed them. As Mrs. Thwaites was there, of course it was the centre of attraction, and there were several people on the spot, as it were, by magic.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. James, taking up the thread of the discourse, "James told me all about it. Captain Twenlow has ridden away with all the horses in the stud."

There was a little amusement caused by this remark, though no one seemed to know whether it was intended as a joke or not.

"How the devil did he manage to do that, I wonder?" said Major Carshore, who had a great dislike to Mrs. James, for he had loved her once, and she had snubbed him, having preferred a young civilian upon three hundred and fifty rupees a month to an elderly captain on four hundred and fifteen. And he very often had an opportunity for showing his contempt for his whilom mistress, for she was not very wise, and occasionally used to make the most absurd remarks, putting the cart before the horse without knowing it, or letting something dreadfully *malapropos* fall plump in the middle of your feelings.

I found that the little observation I have recorded, and several of the same tenor that I have

not recorded, all being very much in Twemlow's favour, simply because I was determined not to prejudge my young friend's case, had made me for the time unpopular. They seemed suddenly to recollect that Twemlow was a friend of mine: so they let the conversation drop. The only one that kept it up was Camelfrunk, and he went on harping upon the old subject "black sheep," and the necessity of expelling them from the flock lest they should taint the immaculate. So finding I could get nothing here, I soon left and came away, determining that after breakfast I would go and ask the brigadier, and I knew the good hearted old gentleman would not disappoint me. On my way home, however, I was intercepted by a messenger on an errand of some import, and I was detained at home all that day in consequence.

In the evening I was engaged to dine with Mrs. Forceps. This lady's husband was then Commissioner of Budgepore, and she was the Commissioner's wife. It may at first sight appear mere tautology to state this, as it would appear to follow from the premises. But I should not be doing Mrs. Forceps justice if I did not give her a sentence all to herself. If I had left it as it stood, it might have been perceived that she was Forceps' wife, but I wished to express a little more, viz. that she was the wife of the Commissioner.

Just a word about her antecedents. She came out to India when a young girl of two and twenty, good looking, well educated, and with lady-like manners, as a governess in the family of the judge of Mámlukabad. Being the only marriageable young lady at that interesting place, where there were exactly fourteen young bachelors all eager to marry if they could find an English lady to lead to the altar, it is not very surprising that she had the prospect before long of a position, better, as the world usually regards such things, than that of a governess in a civilian's family, where she had every possible comfort, was treated in every respect as a lady in her situation should be treated, and enjoyed all the pleasures of society without sharing in its responsibilities and cares. So she was engaged to young Fairbrother of the seventy-seventh N. I., and as it was the hot weather and the chaplain was in the hills at Paharpore, he was written to and requested to come down and perform the marriage ceremony. The day was fixed, and the guests invited, and the breakfast ordered, when a letter came from the Reverend Mr. Freeman, saying that it was as much his life was worth for him to come through the terai (the jungle at the foot of the hills) at that time of the year, and the young couple might wait. Young Fairbrother, who was hotly in love, was frantic. He became quite

a poet in the sublimity of his indignation against "a mercenary priesthood," "pampered ecclesiastics," and "idle drones." The Colonel said it was a great shame, and took the matter up and wrote to the General, who wrote back to say he couldn't interfere. Then he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief, who forwarded the letter on to the Bishop, who sent it back, saying that the chaplains, as regards their movements, were under military orders.

While this correspondence was going on, young Forceps came down from Paharpore and put up with his aunt and uncle, saw Miss Fleetwood, and loved. He was an assistant, just then about to develop into a "joint." Emily Fleetwood was young and fascinating, and if married had a prospect of increasing expenses in her household. Fairbrother was a lieutenant and adjutant of a marching regiment. But, then, he was madly in love. The correspondence with the authorities seemed endless. He wrote and offered Freeman three hundred rupees to come down. Freeman, wise in his generation, wouldn't stir without money. The money was sent, and he came in time to unite in the bonds of matrimony—Emily Fleetwood and Charles Forceps.

Forceps gave him two hundred rupees more, and he returned to his flock at Paharpore. Fairbrother was saved from the cares of a

young family and a straitened income. Freeman invested his five hundred rupees in the Budgepore Bank, which was formed before the days of "limited liability," and stopped payment one morning. He never knew an hour's peace after that for many years, and his five hundred rupees cost him as many thousands.

Mrs. Forceps filled to perfection the position fate had placed her in, she made a good wife and an excellent mother, and was at the time I write queen of Budgepore.

Like the famous minister who rose from a humble labourer to be ruler of a kingdom, and kept locked up in a room the soiled garments he had worn in the days of his poverty, in order that he might frequently, by seeing them, be reminded of his former state, she allowed the recollection of her past position to adorn the station she now filled as the first lady of Budgepore.

Among the official residents at that favoured station were a Mr. and Mrs. Thomas. Mr. Thomas was in every respect a good, worthy, upright, and honest man, but he had U.S.,* the mark of the beast, upon him. Still, as he filled a very responsible official position, he was occasionally visited, at least I mean his wife was, by the civilians and the officers in the station.

* Uncovenanted Service.

Mrs. Thomas had been a schoolfellow of Mrs. Forceps, and they had both started in the world simultaneously in their career as governesses. The one, fortune had led to India and wedded her to an embryo commissioner; the other, fate had kept at home, where Thomas one day, being on furlough, met and loved her. Mrs. Thomas, a sensible woman, neither courted nor shunned the opportunities afforded her by the position of her old schoolfellow, of entering into society, but took matters as they came, received with lady-like courtesy but without any affectation the visitors that chose to call, saved as much money as she could for her husband out of his hard-earned and slender income, and looked after her children.

Mrs. Forceps, had she been left to herself, would have allowed none of the artificial conventionalities of Indian life to interfere with her good nature and regard for her old schoolfellow, though the two girls as children had never been very intimate. But she was fettered by her husband's prejudices, and once or twice during their married life had provoked him into using unchivalrous and unmanly words, when, resisting her importunities to allow her to break through the barrier of social prejudice and renew her intimacy with Mrs. Thomas, he had forgotten himself so far as to taunt her with her position before marriage.

However, he was always ashamed of himself after these outbursts of temper, and her quiet, lady-like dignity of demeanour was much more than a match for his littleness of mind. So it came to pass that after one of these little exhibitions of domestic strife, his repentant feelings led him so far as to beg his offended wife to ask the Thomases to dinner. And it so happened that on this occasion I, with many other Budgeporeans, were invited and went accordingly.

The Forceps had a tolerably large family, and almost every five years Mrs. Forceps went to England with relays of children to be located with relations, guardians, and wives of clergymen on the sea coast, who took charge of "Indian children." At present the eldest of the little ones who cheered their home with their bright sunny faces and merry voices, was rather a precocious child, Miss Lucinia. She was a little over five, a pretty girl with blue eyes, delicate complexion, and long flaxen hair that curled down over her alabaster neck and shoulders, for she always wore a low frock in the evening, and it was in the evening that I generally saw her.

There were the elements of a pleasant little party assembled when I arrived, and I was the last of the guests. I do not recollect now who there were particularly, some fourteen or fifteen

in all. But I do recollect that the Thwaiteses were there, and the Mountjoys, and young Perkins the adjutant, whose soul was in his profession, and who looked on every being in a black coat, as at least one degree removed below Perkins in a red jacket, in the scale of creation.

And of course there were the Thomases. Although no such thing was hinted at by word of mouth or in writing, yet one felt that *the* people of the party were the Thomases. There they were, heaven scaled at last! Mr. and Mrs. Thomas, bearing U.S., the mark of the beast, though there was no external indication whatever of it either in their dress, their demeanour, or their conversation! No matter, there was a feeling among that little group that Mr. Forceps had immolated himself on the altar of domestic peace, and sacrificed at his hearth the time-honoured prejudices of the traditions of a century.

No man could be more studiously and yet unostentatiously polite than was Forceps. Neither by word, nor sign, nor gesture did he let it be understood, that to-day, for the first time, had the barrier of his officialized social circle been invaded by the mark of the beast. Nevertheless, in spite of all, there was a feeling there, that the Thomases were *the* people of the party.

My entrance apparently caused a break in a conversation, with difficulty sustained, about the weather, and after I had shaken hands and seated myself in a vacant chair by Mrs. Thwaites, there ensued one of those awkward and rather uncomfortable pauses in the conversation before dinner among a small party, where you feel the necessity of adopting the worst possible method of keeping up or originating a conversation, that is, thinking of something to say. When, among a number of people, there is a silence, no matter for how short a time, the first person who speaks, speaks as it were in public, and all men are not used to public speaking, so I suppose it comes to pass, sometimes, that before dinner you think of something to say and don't say anything, and at dinner you don't think of anything to say and talk a good deal. Any how, there was a dead silence, till little Lucy, —Lucy she was called, though her name was Lucinia,—broke the silence and said,—

"Mamma, dear!"

She was standing then by her mother's knee.

"Yes, Lucy," said her mother.

"Do the uncovenanted go to heaven when they die?"

I suppose if a shell had fallen into the middle of us we should all have jumped up and run

away. As it was, we were fixed to our seats. Mrs. Thwaites, who thoroughly appreciated a good joke (not the least pleasant trait in her character) was very nearly committing herself by a peal of laughter. She was covering as much of her face as she could with her handkerchief, but by the quivering of her bust I could see she was with difficulty stifling her merriment. No one exactly seemed to know which way to look. There was an awkward pause for a second or two. It was Forceps' duty to fill the breach.

"What very silly questions you do ask, Lucy," said her father, taking her upon his knee; "of course, all people who are good go to heaven; it makes no matter, you know, when you die what you are so long as you are good, even soldiers——"

There was a sort of stifled snort from Perkins, who was sitting on the other side of Mrs. Thwaites at this second *faux pas*, and he gave an incipient wriggle in his chair at the same time. I was most afraid of my next neighbour, for she was literally shaking with subdued laughter.

"What a distressing accident that is to the Lieutenant-Governor," said I, acting under a sudden fit of inspiration, and perfectly desperate.

"What is it?" asked two or three at once. My purpose was gained.

"Oh, haven't you read it in the *Delhi*," replied I, seeing that, having accomplished my purpose, it was necessary for me to look out for a retreat.

"No; there is nothing that I see," said Mountjoy, with the paper in his hand.

"He fell into the lake while out fishing," I said, thinking that better than making his gun burst.

"Dinner is ready," said the khansama at the door.

I took Mrs. Thwaites in to dinner. She had not stopped laughing when the salmon was taken round.

"Is this some of the fish the Lieutenant-Governor caught?" she said.

"Yes," said I; "just before he fell in. Never mind him, I think you owe me something. Another second, and propriety would have been shocked by a peal of laughter."

The Lieutenant-Governor's dip into the lake had saved society at Budgepore. But I have forgotten all about Twemlow.

Later in the evening, after the ladies had left the dining-room, I found myself next to Appletree, of the 77th. He always went by the *sobriquet* of "Apples." And to him I addressed the question, as to the matter which was then uppermost in my mind, I mean what

it was that had happened to my young friend, Twemlow.

"Oh, yes; of course, I know all about it," said Apples, directly I mentioned it. "I heard it all at Chugli's last night. Why don't you go there, if you want to hear the news? It's the best place in the station for finding out the gossip."

"You don't mean to say," said I, inexpressibly shocked, "that you would have me go to a prayer-meeting, in order to pick up scandal!"

"Well, I don't know," replied Apples; "you have such a queer way of putting things; in that sense, perhaps, it is not quite the thing, but anyhow, that's where I always get the news, and I go regularly."

After this, we went into the drawing-room. I asked six different people that night the same question, and they all gave me different answers, and there was not one of them that could give the least clue as to the source of the information, or from what quarter the report originally came. One said, Twemlow had been embezzling money; another, that he had run away with the horses; a third, that he had purposely burnt his house down to destroy the accounts; a fourth, that he had been making money by the leases of the stud lands to cultivators; a fifth, that he had killed an overseer;

and a sixth, that he had been giving bills on bankers or agents, with whom he had no assets.

As we were coming away, and were saying good night to Mrs. Forceps, I happened to be the last in the room. So I said:—

"Do you know, Mrs. Forceps, what is this about the Twemlows?"

"No, I do not," she said, "except that they are in some trouble. It is totally impossible to believe the accounts you hear. It was to-day I heard it, when I was out calling in cantonments. And some very unkind remarks were made in my presence. So, directly I got home I wrote to Mrs. Twemlow, and sent the letter out by a mounted messenger; and I told her I heard something was amiss, and that if they had to come into the station, she would find rooms and everything ready for them here. I thought he might be obliged to come in here. You know them, don't you?"

"Yes, very well indeed. I am quite sure there is no truth in any report that attributes anything dishonourable to my friend Twemlow."

"Good night."

"Good night."

The gentlemen guests were lighting their cheroots under the porch; Forceps was standing at the doorway. They were talking about cheroots, and Forceps was just saying he had

recently got a new batch up from Mackenzie Lyall's.

"Good night, Forceps," I said; "you're a lucky fellow."

He thought I referred to the new batch of cheroots.

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW A GREAT SOCIAL PROBLEM WAS SOLVED.

NEXT morning, after breakfast, I determined to hear the truth about my friend Twemlow, and drove over to the brigadier's in time to catch the old gentleman at his after-breakfast cheroot, and before the Brigade-Major came for the day's orders. I found the Brigadier as I expected, in his room. He was always glad of a chat, and invariably began, as it was observed, much to our amusement, with abusing his Brigade-Major. No matter to whom he was talking, he always, as it were, lifted up the sluice-gate and let off all his superfluous spleen by a little hearty abuse of Baker the Brigade-Major, and then he was comfortable.

"Do you know," he said to me in a confidential sort of whisper, as I sat down, "that fellow Baker's the d——est fool that ever was

born. This superlative was a favourite expression with the Brigadier who was not very choice sometimes in his language.

It was, as I say, his ordinary method of beginning the conversation to make some remark to the above effect, no matter whom he was addressing, and he always waited for a reply; it was necessary to say something—"indeed," or "I'm sorry for it," or "what a pity," or "he doesn't look so," meaning that Baker did not look such a fool or such a reprobate as the Brigadier always described him. On the present occasion he said, in answer to my commonplace "indeed," on hearing that he was "the d——est fool that ever lived;" "What d'you think he's done now?" I said I really could form no idea of the excesses into which Baker's folly was not capable of leading him. "Well," he said, "he's gone and ordered the brigade to parade to-morrow in quarter distance column instead of in line!" And he looked at me as much as to say, there, now, can it enter into the imagination of man's head to conceive such an unpardonable act of idiotcy as that? Then he added, "he's a fool, that's what he is, and so were his father and mother for begetting him."

I could not help thinking how much easier it would be to write three lines with a pencil on a scrap of paper, which would at once rectify the unpardonable folly which Baker had been

guilty of in the Brigadier's eyes; but then it was a habit of his, and now that the surplus muddy water had run through the sluice, it had left the reservoir behind it tolerably clear.

"Do tell, me, Brigadier," said I, "the real truth about this affair of Twemlow's. I cannot make head or tail of what I hear."

"No, I should think not," he said, after a hearty laugh. "No, I should say not. Neither could I. So I got on my horse yesterday and rode out there. I have seen Twemlow, and he has told me all about it;" and again he went off into a hearty laugh.

"I am glad to see by the way you treat the matter that it is nothing serious. I felt sure Twemlow could never be guilty of any dishonourable conduct."

"My dear fellow," said the Brigadier, "I really wonder at you, with your reputation for wisdom and philosophy speaking in that way." He was quite serious now. "I was laughing at Twemlow's story, and I'll tell it to you. But don't ever talk to me about a man not being guilty of dishonourable conduct, and therefore you know no harm can come to him. It doesn't follow, I can tell you. I could count them off on my fingers now—one, two, three, four, five, six—these six that I recollect now off hand, and if I were to sit down to think I should recollect as many more, I dare say—men that I have known

in my time; *known*, mind you, and to my certain knowledge ruined, cashiered, reduced, transported, by gad, one of 'em was, when there had been nothing more dishonourable in their conduct than there has been in your's or mine. You don't know what a place India is."

"Is it true Twemlow is under arrest?"

"Yes, it is. I put him under arrest by order from the General," and here the Brigadier again burst out laughing.

"I'll tell you what he has done," he said, wiping the tears from his eyes from excess of laughter. "Poor Twemlow, you know, hasn't the least idea of his duty, at least when he went to the stud, he hadn't. Not a single thing did he know about it. As ill-luck would have it, the overseer was laid up with fever, and the head baboo had gone away to be married, and there wasn't a soul there that could put Twemlow up to anything. He hadn't been there a day before in comes an indent duly passed from Fitzburr for a lot of remounts for his troop. The troop was just going on escort with the Governor-General, and Fitzburr was glad to get fresh horses, as he likes to cut a swell with his troop, you know. Twemlow, it seems, had one idea, and only one idea, about stud horses, and that is, that they were always marked with an R., which he thought meant 'Remount.' So when this indent came in he

got hold of the marking iron, and he had them all stamped R. before he sent them off!"

The reader, who it is possible may understand almost as little about the custom and practice in the stud as did my friend Twemlow when he went to take charge of that establishment at Budgepore, must be told that Government horses, when they become unserviceable, are inspected by a committee and "cast," as it is called, that is, set aside to be sold by auction, when they are stamped on the buttock with the letter R.

When the horses reached Umballa, and Major Fitzburr went to see them, he gazed with horror and consternation at the fatal letter.

"'What,' he said to his Adjutant, 'have they sent me all castors! By George, I'll condemn them all instanter! Where's White?' White was the Vet. White came. 'Mr. White, do you see they have sent us all castors?' 'Yes, sir,' says White, who, although he was 'Vet,' knew just as much about a horse as horses did about him. 'Examine them,' says Fitzburr, 'and a regimental committee will assemble this evening.' So White drew up the report, and there every horse figured; one was spavined, another had a sand crack, one had this and another had that: he found out something the matter with them all, because, you know, he daren't expose his ignorance and report a castor sound" (here

the old Brigadier laughed till the tears literally rolled down his cheeks). "There isn't a complaint or a disease that a horse ever had since the day they came two and two out of Noah's ark that some of these hadn't had. The regimental committee, of course, signed the papers, and then there was a station committee ordered. The President of the station committee was Colonel Crawfoot, who may be a good judge of a camel, but I'm blest if he is of a horse. Well, he went down to the parade ground, saw the Vet who showed him the R., whereupon he signed the papers and went home. By-and-by the two members of the committee came one after the other, and did the same. So the remounts were in due time ordered to be sold by auction. And I don't know if it's true, but I hear the Vet bought some five or six for a mere song, and so I believe did each of the subalterns of Fitzburr's troop, and Fitzburr himself got a pair for his carriage. Well, of course, there was a deuce of a row about it, and the upshot of it is that Twemlow is under arrest."

"And what is he charged with?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen the charge, and I am rather curious to do so; for young Simmons knows just as much about military law and drawing up a charge as Twemlow does about breeding horses."

Shortly after this, Twemlow came into Budge-

pore under arrest, and I learnt from him that the circumstances of the case were just as the Brigadier had told them to me.

There was a great discussion at Budgepore as to what should be done with regard to calling on the Twemlows when they came in. I happened to be present on most of the occasions when the thing was discussed, but I never let out that I was the only one that did know that Mrs. Forceps had asked them to put up at their house. I kept that to myself, and quietly watched the stream as it flowed along. I think nearly all the married ladies were together one morning when it was discussed, at least I recollect Mrs. Mountjoy, Mrs. Cameltrunk, Mrs. Smithies, Mrs. James, and Mrs. Fantail were there, and they unanimously resolved that society demanded of them to cut Mrs. Twemlow, because her husband was temporarily under a cloud. They each, I suppose, acted in conformity with the wishes and views of their husbands, and it was in vain for me to utter the common-place remark about a man being innocent till proved guilty, and so on. The fair conclave pronounced their verdict, and I said nothing more.

The Budgepore world, of course, bowed its head meekly to the decision of these august powers. And, in consequence, it is utterly out of my capacity to depict the consternation that

overwhelmed society, when on the evening after the Twemlows came in, Mrs. Twemlow appeared in Mrs. Forceps' carriage at the band! It was a sort of moral earthquake, a bursting of a social shell right under their noses. Mrs. Mountjoy thought Mrs. Forceps was *so* eccentric, there was no knowing what she wouldn't do. Mrs. Cameltrunk said what could you expect from a *ci devant* governess. Mrs. Smithies confided to Apples at that evening prayer-meeting that Mrs. Forceps was known to have Popish tendencies, and that, as Apples knew, would account for a great deal. Mrs. Fantail, the Collector's wife, thought Mr. Forceps would be removed when the Lieutenant-Governor heard of it, and Mrs. James said it would be very awkward for Mrs. Forceps she thought, when Captain Twemlow was transported. However, they all made a secret compact that none of them would call at the Commissioner's while the Twemlows were there. In fact there was a sort of rebellion. Mrs. Forceps was voted "deposed" from her throne as the leading star of Budgeporé, and Mrs. Fantail was elected, constitutionally to succeed to her place. I say, constitutionally, because, if Mrs. Forceps was constitutionally deposed, it was quite right that Mrs. Fantail should succeed her. It was a difficult question to decide, however, and, on the whole, I am of opinion that there was no change,

that Mrs. Fantail never was legally promoted, because Mrs. Forceps never was legally deposed, and certainly she never resigned.

It happened that a short time after the revolution or the rebellion, for a revolution is an accomplished rebellion, and I dont think this ever was actually accomplished, the disaffected were electrified at the astounding intelligence that the Lieutenant-Governor was coming through Budgepore and was going to put up with the Commissioner!

Now here *was* a pretty piece of business! Wasn't Mrs. Fantail in a way about it! The Lieutenant-Governor's untoward arrival just then, and his putting up with the Commissioner, would not only deprive her at once of the dignity she had acquired as the head of the malcontents, but it would condemn them all in their conduct towards the Twemlows, and worse than all, it was so vexatious that she was bound by compact and by honour not to call, and the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Byewilwuffa would go through Budgepore without her paying her devotions at their shrine!

There is nothing I know of that so nearly approaches idolatry as the feelings which civil servants, from collectors downwards, as well as their wives, bear towards the Lieutent-Governor. The Honourable Kist Byewilwuffa was no exception. I suppose it arises from their coming to

view the Lieutenant-Governor as the impersonation of the spirit of the order. And assuredly in Mr. Byewilwuffa's case they were not far out. A man more perfectly useless in his position, it is impossible to conceive; yet they looked on him as a Solon in law, a Demosthenes in eloquence, a Socrates in philosophy, in short, as little less than divinity in everything. The fact to other eyes being that he was a very ordinary mortal, with less than the average amount of intellect, totally void of every generous impulse, every good feeling, dead, in fact, to every consideration but the interests of his own service. All the routine work of the office which is generally dignified by the word "Government," was conducted by the Secretary, Mr. Khas Mowza, who went usually by the nickname Moses, among those who were profane enough to nickname one who stood so near to the object of adoration as did Mowza to the Honourable Kist Byewilwuffa.

Of course it was a crushing blow for Mrs. Fantail, the Lieutenant-Governor's arrival at Budgepore. She was not only condemned and stultified in the eyes of the faction, but she felt all the mental horror of a devotee, when his demon-god seems to frown at him for some act of disobedience. But if she could by any possibility get out of that foolish compact and go and call, it would not be so bad, because she

would have the pleasure of dipping her wings in the sunbeams of official greatness, and if she was the only lady (oh the pretty little traitress!) out of all Budgepore, who was asked to meet the Hon'ble Mrs. Kist Byewilwuffa, why it was not in nature that she would not be able to make an impression on the Hon'ble Mr. Kist Byewilwuffa. There were only three days. They were to be there on Monday, and that was Thursday. She must call on Friday, or not at all.

Yes; she did! She ordered her carriage without even telling her husband where she was going, and drove to Mrs. Forceps and paid the visit, the preparatory visit, that would be followed by an invitation to meet the Lieutenant-Governor and his wife on Monday. Oh treachery! *O tempora! O mores!* Unworthy descendant of Boadicea! The queen of the faction thus betrayed her cause!

The visit was paid. She had a ten minutes' chat with Mrs. Forceps and Mrs. Twemlow, and Captain Twemlow handed her to her carriage.

Not half pleased with herself, she was driving out of the compound when another carriage met her's. It was the Smithies' equipage. She leant back very far into the corner, among the morocco cushions, and squeezed in the flounces of her dress and her stiff embroidered petticoat,

that peeped out from underneath, into the smallest possible compass, in the vain hope she might pass undiscovered, for she never dreamed that there was anybody but Mr. Smithies in the carriage, going of course to pay a visit upon the Commissioner. But Smithies would see her, and would be sure to mention to his wife her, Mrs. Fantail's, treachery. All these considerations, thoughts, movements, and artifices were the work of the two seconds that elapsed after the heads of the horses in the other carriage were within sight of Mrs. Fantail's pretty hazel eyes. Her heart seemed to leap into her mouth as she saw Mrs. Smithies in the carriage, sitting forward to see who it was in Mrs. Fantail's conveyance! There was no doubt about it! Both ladies blushed, but there was no one there to see them.

Mrs. Smithies on the way home met Mrs. James going, and the latter as she returned met Mrs. Cameltrunk and Mrs. Mountjoy, who went together. So they all were traitresses to each other, but each one, except Mrs. Cameltrunk and Mrs. Mountjoy thought the secret was confined to the other. But it soon came out, because Mrs. Smithies told Mrs. Fantail she had seen Mrs. James going, and the latter of course confided to her that she had met Mrs. Cameltrunk and Mrs. Mountjoy.

And so Mrs. Twemlow was visited.

It was all a canard about the Lieutenant-Governor's coming! He never came at all, and was never expected! It was Apples who set the report going from *malice prepense*. He had been taken into Mrs. Smithies' confidence, and heard all about the compact, and in the depths of his own moral consciousness he conceived the idea of circulating the report about the Lieutenant-Governor, on purpose to see if it would not produce the very results it did! Whether he learned it or not at the prayer-meetings at Chugli's house, he had a marvellous knowledge of human nature, had Apples.

At last a copy of the charge against Twemlow came. The original was sent up to head-quarters for approval. The charge was as follows:—

"That he, Augustus Theophilus Twemlow, &c., &c., being a stud officer, serving 120 miles from Fort William, had committed an offence to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, in that,

1st. On or about the 27th November, 18—, he passed into the service as serviceable, fourteen unserviceable horses.

2nd. That on or about the 27th November, he, &c., &c., stamped, or caused to be stamped, on the back, fourteen serviceable horses, the property of Government, with the letter R.

against the peace of our sovereign lady the Queen, her crown and dignity."

The Judge-Advocate-General returned the charge with a slight alteration, he took out the words "on the back," and inserted "fraudulently" in their place.

The charges, however, had to pass through the office before they went to Budgepore, and in the office they fortunately had to go through a purifying process in the hands of a head writer named Richelieu, who supplied all the legal knowledge required at head-quarters, and so they eventually arrived in a proper shape, under which Twemlow was to be tried on two counts; one for fraudulently, the other for carelessly stamping serviceable remounts as unserviceable and condemned horses.

The court-martial was ordered to assemble on the 15th of March.

CHAPTER III.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

THERE was a good deal of excitement at Budgepore when the court-martial began. Colonel Sungeen was President. I need not detail the rest of the officers' names that composed the Court. Another officer, I forget his name now, was the prosecutor. Simmons, the Deputy-Judge-Advocate, delayed, that is to say, conducted, the proceedings. I have already stated that Twemlow was to be tried on two counts, one with having fraudulently passed unserviceable horses into the service in lieu of serviceable ones, and the other count was for carelessly and negligently allowing serviceable horses to be passed as unserviceable, condemned and sold. Deprived of the technical language in which the legal lore of Richelieu, the uncovenanted head

of the Judge Advocate General's office, had folded them, the above is the sum and substance of the charges.

The prosecutor commenced with making a statement, which I will not weary you with, and then called his first witness Major Fitzburr, who stated that, when the remounts arrived at Umballa, he went down to the parade ground to see them, and found to his astonishment that they were all castors. He had directed the Veterinary Surgeon, Mr. White, to examine them, who had found them all more or less unserviceable, and committees having been assembled in the usual manner, and the horses having been condemned, they were sold by auction.

Major Fitzburr's evidence lasted till tiffin time. After tiffin, the prisoner proceeded to cross-examine.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Did you examine the horses?

A.—Yes, I did.

Q.—And what did you find the matter with them?

A.—I found them all stamped R., and consequently unserviceable.

Q.—Did you never see a serviceable horse stamped with an R. before?

The prosecutor objected to this question, and the Court was closed to decide.

Upon the Court re-opening, the President announced that it was the opinion of the Court that the question should not be put.

It being four o'clock, the Court adjourned.

SECOND DAY.

Cross-examination of Major Fitzburr was resumed.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Where are the horses now?

The prosecutor having objected to this question, the Court closed to consider.

Upon re-opening the Court, the President announced that the Court were unanimous that the question should not be put. The Court, at this stage of the proceedings, it being now one o'clock, adjourned for tiffin.

After tiffin, the cross-examination was resumed.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Have you got any of the horses in your possession?

The prosecutor having objected to this question, the Court closed to consider, and, on re-opening, the president announced that the Court were of opinion that the question might be put.

A.—Yes, I have.

Q.—How many?

The prosecutor having objected to this ques-

tion, and the Court having closed to consider, decided that this question should not be put.

It being now four o'clock the Court adjourned.

THIRD DAY.

Cross-examination of Major Fitzburr resumed.

Q.—(By prisoner.) How much did you pay for the horses you bought at auction?

The prosecutor having objected to this question, and the Court having closed to consider, decided it might be put.

A.—I paid twenty rupees for one, sixteen for another, twenty-five for another, thirty for another, and thirty-eight for another.

It being now tiffin time, the Court adjourned.

After tiffin, the cross-examination of Major Fitzburr was resumed.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Which of the officers of your troop, besides yourself, purchased horses out of this batch at the auction?

This question having been objected to by the prosecutor, the Court was closed, on re-opening they decided it should not be put.

The Court then adjourned, it being four o'clock.

FOURTH DAY.

The cross-examination of the witness was resumed.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Did any of the officers

of your troop purchase any of the horses out of the batch at the auction?

A.—Yes.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Will you be good enough to let us know their names?

The prosecutor having objected to this question, the Court was closed to consider, and, upon re-opening, decided it might be put.

It being now one o'clock, the Court adjourned to tiffin.

After tiffin the cross-examination was resumed.

A.—Andrews, Smith and Jones.

Q.—(By prisoner). Were any of these officers on the committee that condemned the horses?

Prosecutor objected to this question, and a long discussion ensued; after which the Court closed to deliberate, and on re-opening, decided that the question might be put.

A.—Yes, Andrews and Smith were.

Q.—Did they consider the horses really unserviceable?

A.—No, they did not.

Q.—How do you know?

A.—Because Andrews told Smith he thought there was nothing the matter with the horses except the R., and that when that was got rid of, they would be first-rate ones.

By Court.—Was that in your hearing?

A.—No, not in my hearing.

Q.—What was Jones's opinion about them?

Prosecutor objected to this question, and after a long discussion the Court adjourned, at 4 P.M.

Fifth Day.

The discussion of yesterday was resumed this morning. At length the Court closed to consider, and on re-opening, decided the question might be put; but as it was now tiffin time, they adjourned for half-an-hour. After tiffin, the cross-examination was resumed.

A.—He thought they were first-rate horses.

Q.—Were either of those officers on the regimental Committee?

A.—Yes, two of them were members of the Committee, and the third was President.

Q.—(By prisoner.) Which was the President?

The prosecutor objected very strongly to this question, and read several passages out of a number of formidable-looking law books, to show why the question should not be allowed. It was referred to the Deputy-Judge-Advocate, who said he thought it really did not matter. The court having closed to consider, decided that the question should not be put.

It being four o'clock the Court adjourned.

Sixth Day.

Shekh Sachai Khan, Jemadar, Budgepore Stud, called and sworn (examined through interpreter.)

Q.—(By prosecutor.) How long have you been in the Budgepore Stud?

A.—Forty years.

Q.—Are any of the horses in the stud marked with the letter R.?

A.—Yes, all.

Q.—Are all the horses marked with R. when they are in the stud?

A.—Yes. All the Sirkar's (Government) horses are born with the mark upon them.

Prisoner declined to cross-examine.

Court adjourned to tiffin.

Jemadar Peer Bux was the next witness.

Q.—(By prosecutor.) Did you take a batch of horses, remounts, from the Budgepore Stud to Umballa in November last?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Were they stamped with the letter R. when they were made over to you?

A.—No, they were not. They were not stamped at all, either when they were made over to me, or when I made them over to the Major Sahib at Umballa.

Q.—What non-commissioned officer went with you?

A.—Havildar Ahmed Khan.

Prisoner declines to cross-examine.

It being four o'clock the Court adjourned.

SEVENTH DAY.

Havildar Ahmed Khan sworn.

Q.—(By prosecutor.)—Did you go on command with the Jemadar, the last witness, to Umballa, in November last, in charge of horses?

A.—Yes, I went on command with the Jemadar, the last witness, to Umballa in November last, but there were no horses with us.

The President of the Court here remarked that perhaps the witness had not exactly understood the question. Would the interpreter explain more clearly what was meant?

The interpreter, addressing witness:—Look here. When you went to Umballa, had you no horses at all with you?

A.—Not one.

The President thought perhaps the witness was confounding the word "ghora," a horse, with "gora," a European.

The Interpreter.—Look here, I am not asking you about white men, but about horses: do you mean to say you took no horses to Umballa?

A.—Yes, sahib.

The Interpreter.—Then what did you take?

A.—Animals, sahib.

Q.—What animals?

A.—Goats, sheep, buffaloes—

Q.—No horses?

A.—No, sahib.

Prisoner declined to cross-examine, Court adjourned.

Next witness, Lieutenant Andrews, sworn.

Q.—(By prosecutor).—Were you president of the Regimental Committee appointed in November last to report upon remounts received from the Budgepore Stud?

A.—I was.

Q.—In what state were the horses?

A.—I don't know.

Q.—Didn't you examine them?

A.—No, the Veterinary Surgeon did that, and reported them unsound, and the Major said as they were all castors they were to be condemned.

Cross-examined by prisoner.

Q.—Did you buy any of the remounts when they were sold by auction?

The prosecutor objected to this question, and the Court closed to consider it; upon re-opening, the Court ruled that it might be put.

It being 4 P.M., the Court then adjourned.

Eighth Day.

Lieutenant Andrews gives reply to the question of the previous day.

A.—I did buy some of the horses.

Q.—What for?

The prosecutor having objected to this question, the Court was closed to consider it; before re-opening, as it was one o'clock, the court adjourned to tiffin,

The Court having decided that the question should be put, witness replied.

A.—I bought them because I wanted them.

Q.—If they were unserviceable, what did you intend to do with them?

A.—I did not say they were unserviceable.

Q.—Did you not report them unserviceable in the Committee Report?

A.—Yes, but that is a totally different thing from considering them unserviceable in the sense of useless for one's own purposes.

Q.—Then you consider these horses though condemned, were serviceable?

A.—They were unserviceable because they had R. upon them.

Q.—How does the letter R. make them unserviceable, if in other respects they are serviceable?

A.—It makes them castors, and castors are unserviceable.

It being 4 P.M., the Court adjourned.

NINTH DAY.

Colonel Crawfoot called and sworn.

Q.—(By prosecutor.)—Were you President of the Station Committee that assembled at Umballa in November last to survey and report upon remounts from Major Fitzburr's troop?

A.—I was.

Q.—Did you examine the horses?

A.—No.

Q.—Were you not President of the Committee?

A.—Yes, but I was not directed to examine the horses.

Q.—Did you report them unserviceable?

A.—Yes.

Q.—Why did you do that without examining them?

A.—Because they were marked with the letter R., which made them castors.

Prisoner declined to cross-examine, and the Court adjourned to tiffin.

Next witness, Mr. Veterinary Surgeon White, sworn.

Q.—(By prosecutor).—Did you examine the

remounts that came up from the Budgepore Stud to Umballa in November last?

A.—Yes, I did.

Q.—Was there anything peculiar about them?

A.—There was; they were all castors.

Q.—How do you know they were castors?

A.—They were stamped with the letter R.

Q.—In other respects, were they unserviceable?

This was the most important witness on the trial, and we, that is, all the spectators, were very anxious to know what answer would be given to this. The witness hesitated, stammered, and at last said,—

A.—I don't think I should have condemned them if they had not been marked.

Q.—Were they sound?

A.—No, they were not sound. In the committee report I entered every case and the description of attack from which the animal had been suffering.

Witness shown the committee report, and asked if it is his handwriting.

Cross-examined by prisoner.

Q.—Did you buy any of the horses at the auction?

The Court here adjourned for tiffin. After it re-assembled, the witness replied,—

A.—Yes, I did.

Q.—What for?

A.—For my own use.

Q.—Then the horses were serviceable?

A.—Yes, in that sense they were serviceable. For a private individual they were of use, for government service not.

Q.—Why not?

A.—Because they were marked with the letter R.

Here the examination of witnesses ended, and the prisoner read his defence. I shall not delay you with recording it. It was a very able one.

We were all kept in suspense for three weeks before we knew the upshot of the trial, and then it came out, Twemlow was acquitted on the first charge, and found guilty on the second, and sentenced to be reprimanded. The following were His Excellency's (Sir Walter Grubb was Commander-in-Chief in those days) remarks.

"His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, while confirming, though, at the same time, taking into consideration, which is out of the question in the present case, although his approbation of the sentence has the effect which if circumstances arose similar to those under which that result recently arrived at by the members of the court-martial independently altogether of such considerations as are con-

nected with and in some measure more or less directly dependent on other contingencies in the event of which the result that has now occurred might have been otherwise shown, does not wish to imply what it would seem if it is allowable in these cases to be guided by the ordinary rules in other instances, especially when analogy in circumstances may be looked for, the Court, might not have intended, so far as intention can be presumed or gathered, independently of that alternative, must be aware that in such cases which His Excellency cannot but consider called for considerable intelligence in the transaction more particularly as regards such duties with which the prisoner, in view of that position when under ordinary circumstances nothing less could have been expected does not understand what the Court evidently in respect of the other alternative might not, if the evidence which considering the character and position of the witnesses who if they had not possessed those advantages if as His Excellency assumes, those advantages to be, in the former alternative, peculiarly adapted, as will be seen by reference to the standing orders, trusts that for the future in circumstances where devotion to the interests of the state in duties connected with the Stud Department, will not yield to responsibilities

that in all positions in life more particularly in that under consideration involve."

"This order will be read out to Captain Twemlow in presence of all the officers at present quartered at Budgepore. After which it will be translated and read at the head of every native regiment."

By order,

PAT. GREEN,
Adjutant-General of the Army,
Head Quarters.

Within a month from this date I noticed that five interpreters were sent to England on medical certificate; whether the task of translating the order had not something to do with it I do not know, but I have often thought it may have.

After this, Twemlow returned to the stud, and I never heard of his ever getting into any other scrape through his zeal for the service.

CHRONICLE X.

BUDGEPORE COMMERCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

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BUDGEPORE COMMERCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

A GREAT many fortunes have been made and lost at Budgepore in my time. This has been more especially the case since the joint stock company mania a few years ago. My earliest reminiscences, however, go back to a much earlier date, to the day, for instance, when the Bank of Budgepore was set going, and which, by confining itself to true banking business, that is, in a Budgepore sense, lending money as loans in small sums to needy subalterns and spendthrift civilians, on two personal securities, at enormous interest, realized a good deal. If it was easy to lose money in those days, I am speaking of ten or twenty years ago, it was easy enough to get it.

Tom Pringle, an ensign on a hundred and ninety rupees a month, wanted a couple of thousand to buy a horse and a gun, to pay off a few trifling debts. Jimmy Hare, a lieutenant

in the same corps, wanted the same. So did Stubbs, a captain, also of the gallant regiment. One day at tiffin, in comparing notes, the three made the discovery that they were each and all exactly in the same condition of impecuniosity. So the matter was easily arranged. Pringle got the loan papers first, and filled them up, Hare and Stubbs being his securities. The doctor of the regiment filled up the insurance papers, and Pringle was rich for the time. Then Hare went through the same formalities, Pringle and Stubbs being his securities, and last of all, Stubbs obtained his accommodation on the personal security of Pringle and Hare. As a matter of course, the instalments, after the first few months, when they were regularly paid, fell off, and finally stopped altogether. It was not the bank's business to complain, nor to warn, and so the interest went on accumulating merrily. Stubbs never paid his instalments, but he took for granted Pringle and Hare paid theirs regularly. Each of the two latter was under exactly the same impression with regard to the other two. Meantime, years passed on, the interest at 12 per cent., compound interest, too, accumulated formidably. Still, all were in happy ignorance. Pringle died after two years, Stubbs got into a scrape, and was obliged to leave the service, and Jimmy Hare found himself saddled with a debt of a

little short of fifteen thousand rupees, running on at compound interest, which he had to pay out of his three hundred or less a month, he received as lieutenant in command of a company. When he became junior captain the debt reached 20,000, and as his step was worth that sum to his juniors, they gave it to him, and he resigned after spending twelve years in India, without any pension, and having realized by his step just enough to pay off the bank debt.

This style of business, as you may understand, by easy multiplication, was very profitable, for the bank very seldom indeed drew blanks. Its business increased. Officers in the army took small loans and civilians large ones. The ready facility with which money could be obtained was too tempting a bait to young men who had been, perhaps, a little extravagant. They had but to get two names, names of brother officers, who very possibly were under similar obligations themselves to others, and the thing was done. So this infamous system grew and grew till like a monstrous boa constrictor, it threw its coil round three-fifths of the members of the services.

Debt, debt, debt, was the burden of the melancholy song, the wail uttered from one end of the land to the other. The hard won earnings of a life of toil and danger in a tropical

clime were sacrificed to this; the princely salaries which might have cheered the years of declining life with ease and luxury, were squandered upon this. The portions of the widow and the orphan were snatched away to fill the coffers of the usurers. One small moiety of the service, who had taken shares in the Budgepore Bank, grew rich at the expense of their brethren.

It is an ill wind, however, that blows no good, and one advantage that accrued from these money-lending institutions, was that, there was less need for judges and magistrates and other official persons to go into debt with the natives.

Another of the institutions was the "Budgepore Fire Insurance Company." This Company was remarkably prosperous, and had accumulated a large reserve fund; when about the time that Sir Amethyst Jones was to retire, his period of command of the army having expired, he and his adjutant-general, and some others of the Staff, bought up a large number of the shares at a considerable premium. They then called a general meeting of shareholders, and proposed to wind up the company and divide the reserve fund. Having a preponderance of votes at the meeting, they carried their point, and the Budgepore Fire Insurance Company was wound up, and a division of the assets made among the shareholders.

Perhaps, altogether, the grandest speculation Budgepore ever saw, was the conversion of the famous firm of Cork, Screw and Co. into a joint stock company. This scheme was projected after Mr. Cork had retired from business, when Mr. Screw was the only one of the original partners in the house.

Messrs. Cork, Screw and Co. were dealers in "Europe goods," and did a large business. Shop-keeping or store-keeping, as it ought more properly to be called in India, is a very different thing indeed from similar business in England. There is, at least in Upper India, so little competition, that the ordinary relations between customer and vendor are reversed, and it is a favour rather than anything else for the latter to attend to a customer's requisitions.

It was generally believed that Messrs. Cork, Screw and Co. had been doing a very thriving business, and when the senior partner retired, which he did one day, to Cheltenham, where he set up a large house and establishment, and called himself Major-General Cork of the Indian army, a proposition was put forward to purchase the good will, stock, and business, a joint-stock company being started for the purpose.

There were at the time one or two old gentlemen at Budgepore who had saved a little money, and wanted a good "investment." There was

Sergeant Kunkur, who had been road overseer through six generations of executive engineers. He had the best furnished house in the place, everything from Shearwood's. There was not a chair in his drawing-room that cost under seventy rupees, as he has often told me. He knew a thing or two about the Public Works Department. He has gone home now, and bought a little estate in Ireland. Then there was Colonel Moodle of the 46th N. I. He held rather a curious position in the army, by the way, did Colonel Moodle, which illustrates practically the operation of the amalgamation rules. I call him colonel, but he was properly only lieutenant-colonel, that is by brevet. He was, however, in reality a subaltern, doing subaltern's duty with the corps which was commanded, would you believe it, by his own nephew, Captain Kummerbund! After being thirty years in India, I suppose the colonel found that a subaltern's duties were too confined a limit for his abilities and intellect to range within, and he sighed for something better. He sought and found it in speculation. Then there was the Reverend Erasmus Chillblain, baptist minister at Budgepore. He was not averse to a little speculation. He had saved a little money out of his stipend, and he must needs jeopardize it, not that anyone ever thought of jeopardy in connection with the

joint stock company. Oh, no! We were all to be rich, so rich we should not know what to do with our money. I say we, and you will ask, "What! did you too, Old Mortality, take shares?" "*Certes* I did, and wherefore not? Am I not also mortal?" And how should I have been able to write my chronicle about it, if I had not? More than that, I was a director—yes, on the board of directors.

We called our company the "All Over India Europe Goods Association." The managing agent was called "The secretary;" the deputy shop boy, "assistant secretary;" the book-keeper, "The cashier;" the shop was "The Rooms," the "All Over India Europe Goods Association's Rooms." The little den adjoining the shop where the books were kept, was the "Secretary's office," and so on.

The first meeting was attended by Colonel Moodle, Serjeant Kunkur, Erasmus Chillblain, myself, and Screw. The only one of the whole lot who knew anything about business, being of course Screw. Kunkur it is true understood business of a certain kind, but it was the business of the D. P. W., which you know is not at all like business in other branches.

Colonel Moodle was asked to take the chair out of respect to his rank, and Mr. Screw proceeded to lay before the meeting the prospectus. There was to be a capital of three lacs, raised

by three thousand shares, of a hundred rupees each. The accounts were drawn out in ship-shape order, and laid before the meeting.

This is an abstract of them from memory :—

Capital	Rs. 3,00,000
Outstanding credits . .	. . 50,000
	Rs. 3,50,000
Paid to Cork, Screw and Co. for stock and good-will, business premises, &c. .	Rs. 1,78,000
To liabilities, purchase of stock, &c., &c. . .	1,00,000
Reserve	72,000
	Rs. 3,50,000

This looked all right. There was no doubt that the stock and good will were remarkably cheap at a lac and seventy-eight thousand, and then Cork, Screw and Co. guaranteed the share-holders twelve per cent. for the first two years. This bait took immensely; Erasmus was appointed officiating secretary, and he had applications for shares from all quarters of India. Private soldiers, sergeants with large families dependent on them, retired officers, hundreds

of every rank and position of society invested, or wanted to invest their money in the concern. Cork, Screw and Co.'s reputation was good, and their guarantee was looked on as making the thing as safe as a church. And so it was—quite safe.

The first day, on examining the prospectus and the statement of accounts, I did not like to be too inquisitive. It would look as if I suspected Screw, and I was unwilling to hurt his feelings in any way. It did occur to me, however, that the 72,000 rupees "reserve" required some explanation.

However, no one said anything about it, and the matter was passed over. The next day, however, I did call on Mr. Screw, to ask him to explain that item about the 72,000 rupees.

"Oh, Mr. Screw," I said, after I had sat with him for about five minutes; "I just wanted to ask a question about a little matter in that prospectus, you know. It is not for myself that I want any explanation. I am perfectly satisfied myself that everything is all right, but as I am a director, you know, I might be called upon by some intending shareholder to explain matters; it is just as well that I should be in a position to answer any question that may be asked of me."

"Certainly, my dear Sir, your desire is most reasonable. I shall only be too happy, I

assure you, to give you any information in my power."

"Well," I said, "it is that item, 72,000, that I don't understand."

"Oh, indeed! that is very simple. It is the interest. You see, twelve per cent. on the three lacs comes to thirty-six thousand rupees a year, or seventy-two thousand in the two years. Well, the interest you know is guaranteed for the first two years, and it is always customary to set apart a sum to meet the interest. Suppose the profits the first two years were not to be sufficient to meet it, it would be very awkward, you know, guaranteed and all."

"Certainly, I see," said I, and went away quite satisfied, and feeling rather sorry that I had given so much unnecessary trouble.

So the company was launched. Screw took his lac and seventy-eight thousand and went home. We got our interest regularly for the first two years, "Twelve per cent. per annum," how fine it looked in the prospectus, and the report of the half-yearly meetings. At the end of the two years, however, the Secretary resigned and went home, and after that everything went to the bad. Some said the Secretary could not show a clear balance sheet; some said this, and some said that. All I know is, that the company went into liquidation. I believe myself the chief reason why it broke

down was, because every shareholder considered himself entitled to take goods and never to pay his bill. And when I came to examine the ledger, I was a little surprised to find that there were no other customers except shareholders.

It is now a year and more since the All-Over-India resolved upon liquidation. There was a meeting at Budgepore about it. Colonel Moodle was in the chair. There were all our old friends present—Mooltawee and Dakhil Duftar, Dr. Golee, Fitzmisl, myself, Sergeant Kunkur, Erasmus Chillblain, Captain Kummerbund, and some three or four officers of the 150th, whose names I do not recollect; and last, though not least, our respected Secretary, Fancy Goods, Esq., and several others. You know, matters had not been going on quite as they should. It was in liquidation a very long time, but it never seemed to be any nearer being liquidated. At least all the men who had been appointed liquidators left the country and went home, and the affair was brought into court. Well, the Judge, Mooltawee, asked me if I would undertake the office of liquidator, and, as I had more time to spare than the others, and moreover, as I had a very good legal adviser at hand in my friend Watson, you know—he has the law at his fingers' ends—I consented. Would you believe it! such was my ill-luck, that very day Watson was taken

ill, and went away to Simla, and thence to England, and I never saw him again. Still, I knew Mooltawee would give me every assistance in his power, so far as direction and advice went, and I was not deterred from undertaking the office. Fancy Goods, Esq., sent over to my house all the books, ledgers, letters, bills, &c., &c., which filled two carts, and I stowed them away very carefully, taking every precaution, as I thought, to prevent them from being eaten by white ants, and next day I went over to Mooltawee's court to get my first lesson in my new duties.

"'Your duties?' said Mooltawee, as soon as I had communicated the object of my attendance at his court. 'Yes, I'll tell you what the duties of a liquidator are. They are very simple. First, you have to pay the debts of the company.'

"'Pay the debts!' and my breath almost went out of my body—'why they amount to somewhere about four lacs.'

"'The amount does not make any difference,' said Mooltawee. 'Here you see, it is laid down in paragraph 10, section 149 of the Act, 'the liquidators shall pay the debts of the company.' That's clear, isn't it? Then, the next thing you have to do is to find the contributories.'

"'But they have been trying to find the contributories for the last year or two: and

have not succeeded. The contributories have all vanished into thin air. The most subtle gas, a shower of rain in a gale of wind, are but feeble representations of the faculty for dispersion and disappearance evinced by the contributories.'"

"'No matter,' said Mooltawee, 'you must find them.'"

I returned home disconsolate, to talk the matter over with my friends, co-sharers, and creditors.

We determined to get counsel's opinion, and under the idea that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom, we laid the case before two eminent barristers of Calcutta. In due course of time the opinions came, when what was our consternation to find them diametrically opposed to one another. We had another consultation, and it was proposed to get the opinion of a third. We did so; and you may imagine what our feelings were when we found the third differed essentially from the other two. I had already expended 2,500 rupees in law expenses. But there was no help for it, we felt ourselves forced to lay the case before a fourth counsel. To make a long story short, we got altogether opinions from six different counsel, each of which differed from the other, and the whole presented such a mass of complications to our

unprofessional minds that we were fairly bewildered.

As there really seemed no way out of the labyrinth of difficulties that had accumulated around us, and as my interests were to a great extent concerned in a rapid and easy solution of these difficulties, I volunteered to set out, like Cœlebs in search of a wife, or Keeper in search of his master, in quest of contributories. And as the name of the Company is the All-Over-India Europe Goods Association, so is its nature.

I have visited in the course of my travels almost every large town from Peshawur, in the north, to Hyderabad, in the south of India, but without much result, for you will be able to gather from this judgment of Mooltawee's, in a case that came before him, to establish the liability of a contributory, that it is not so easily done even after you have found your contributory.

Mooltawee's judgment is interesting, apart from the ability and ingenuity with which he deals with the legal subtleties of the case, as it gives a sketch of the rise, progress, and collapse of the company, and affords a very fair insight into the history of commercial speculation at Budgepore. Here is the judgment *in extenso*.

In the Civil Court of Budgepore.

In the matter of the All-Over-India Europe Goods Association, Limited, the Liquidators, plaintiffs, *versus* Kissa Khan, defendant.

This is a suit brought to establish the liability of the defendant as a contributory to the company in liquidation, represented by the plaintiffs as liquidators.

This company, as it appears from records before the Court, was established a few years ago, and subsequently undertook to purchase the stock, business, outstanding debts and goodwill of the firm of Cork, Screw and Co., formerly general merchants and traders in Budgepore.

The affairs of the firm appear to have been in a very prosperous condition up to the period when the senior partner, Mr. Cork, sold out and retired to England. The remaining partner, Mr. Screw, then appears to have entered into several very heavy speculations. He established an All-Over-India Dawk Company, intended, as far as one can judge by the prospectus, to convey travellers to and from any spot between Peshawur and Cape Comorin. But this failed. He then entered into a contract to supply a million sleepers to two or three Railway Companies. But the Railway Companies being under the control of Directors in England,

some of whom were large iron masters, just about that time came to a resolution, grounded on accurate data received from India, that there was no wood in the country suitable for railway sleepers, and it was necessary to ship from England iron sleepers. Mr. Screw, it seems, had contracted with the Railway for five rupees a sleeper, and had also entered into certain arrangements with sub-contractors, by which the sleepers were to be cut and delivered in Budgepore for three rupees eight annas per sleeper, and had advanced these gentlemen twenty thousand rupees to meet current expenses. The railway authorities in England, having decided upon adopting iron sleepers, refused to ratify the contract with Mr. Screw, and he was forced into a court of law to recover what he considered due to him as damages for breach of contract and compensation for losses. In the court of first instance Mr. Screw lost the case with costs, but on appeal the judgment was reversed, and Mr. Screw gained a decree for the whole amount, with costs, in the lower, as well as the upper court. The proceedings, however, occupied two years, and the Railway Companies then carried the case to the Privy Council, but the record was lost on the way to England, the papers having been accidentally consumed in a fire which destroyed the mail when in course of transit to Calcutta. A fresh

set of papers had to be prepared from the originals which were in the court, and were transmitted by another route; but they did not reach England, owing to the mail by which they were being conveyed to Bombay having been robbed by dacoits in the Gwalior territory. The record had to be transcribed a third time, and on this occasion it reached England safely. This occurred three years ago, since which nothing more has been heard of this case, but it is supposed to be nearly ready for hearing by the Privy Council, and may possibly be heard two years hence.

By this time Mr. Screw's losses had been so heavy that he was unable to meet his engagements, and he resolved upon selling his business to a joint stock company; this company was at first called the "Budgepore Joint Stock Company, Limited," and had been got up as the prospectus sets forth, for the purpose of purchasing anything that might be offered for sale, and selling by auction anything anybody could be induced to buy. This company undertook to purchase the business, stock, outstandings, and goodwill of Mr. Screw's firm, but they had no money to pay for it. This difficulty was, however, obviated by a resort to the Budgepore Bank, a new bank got up mainly by the directors of the "Budgepore Joint Stock Company, Limited," assisted by Mr.

Screw. This gentleman and the Directors each took one share in the new bank; but the other shares were rapidly sold, the principal purchasers of them being military officers and members of the civil service. The bank having been thus formed, their first transaction was a loan of three lacs to the Budgepore Joint Stock Company, Limited, for the purpose of purchasing the business, stock, outstandings, and goodwill of Mr. Screw's business; upon the security of the stock then in hand, valued at one lac, and some house property belonging to Mr. Screw at Budgepore and elsewhere, represented as worth three lacs. When the transaction was complete, Mr. Screw made over his property to the Budgepore Joint Stock Company, Limited, upon payment in cash of one lac and a half of rupees, and an equal sum in shares in the company, which now changed its name to the "All-over-India Europe Goods Association, Limited."

After paying Mr. Screw a hundred and seventy-eight thousand rupees, the company had still in hand remaining from the original sum borrowed from the Budgepore Bank, one hundred and twenty-two thousand rupees. This would appear from the account books of the company to have been thus disposed of:—

To Mr. Screw, the promoter	Rs. 5000
Bonus to six directors	6000

Brought forward	11,000
Interest at 12 per cent. for three years guaranteed to shareholders at 36,000 per annum . .	1,08,000
For working expenses . .	8,000
Total .	1,22,000

The affairs of the company seem to have been conducted for many years on the most approved (Budgeporean) commercial principles. An account was opened with all shareholders, who were allowed their goods at cost price, an additional twenty per cent. being added to the price of articles sold to the general body of constituents to compensate for the loss on sales to shareholders. The three thousand rupees which had been set aside for working capital was expended in defraying the travelling expenses of Fancy Goods, Esq., who came out from one of the first London houses to take charge of the company's affairs as General Manager. It is due to this gentleman to state that at the first annual meeting of shareholders he brought to their notice the financial prospects of the company, and represented that nine-tenths of the constituents were shareholders who were allowed a heavy discount on purchases: that in the nine months which had elapsed between the purchase of the business by the company and his, Mr. Fancy Goods', assuming charge, there had accumulated a lac of rupees of out-

standings, of which seventy-five per cent. would have to be written off to profit and loss, while a large sum was due in England for stock which had been supplied, amounting to £12,000. An extraordinary general meeting of shareholders was shortly afterwards held, and the condition of the company's affairs laid before them. Two alternative courses were suggested, either a fresh call of five hundred rupees a share, or the payment of the debts then due by shareholders for purchases effected. The meeting unanimously rejected the latter course, but consented to a call of ten rupees per share.

The business was carried on for another year, when at the annual meeting it was resolved that as the original debt to the Budgepore bank with interest had now risen to 4,020,000 rupees, they should apply to the bank for another loan of six lacs, out of which the original debt was to be liquidated, and the balance paid by instalments of 10,000 rupees per annum. The directors of the bank being most of them shareholders in the company, the proposition was favourably entertained, and the loan was negotiated.

The guaranteed interest of 12 per cent. having been paid regularly from the fund set apart for that purpose, the shares had risen considerably in value, and had been purchased by many persons at a distance, who were, no

doubt, induced to make the investment by the regularity with which so handsome a dividend was annually declared.

The affairs of the Bank of Budgepore, however, were not altogether satisfactory to the shareholders, and at the next annual meeting, which was held subsequently to the negotiation of the loan of six lacs, some of the shareholders pressed the directors for explanations, which after a threat to resort to legal proceedings, were at last offered, and the result was that a new manager was appointed, and steps taken to obtain regular payment of interest from the All-Over-India Europe Goods Association, Limited. It will be sufficient to add that these proceedings resulted in the company being put in liquidation.

It now remains to be seen how far the defendant is fixed with the liability of a contributory. The plaintiff asserts that he has been from the first a shareholder in the company, that his application for shares was duly entered in the register, that scrip was issued in accordance with that application, and that dividends to the extent of 12 per cent. have been paid to him regularly as well as to other shareholders. The plaintiff adds, and supports the statement by a large amount of evidence, that he is unable to produce parol vouchers, as the register showing the entry of defen-

dant's application, and the issue of scrip and his receipts for the yearly payment of dividends, because these documents have been destroyed by white ants.

Defendant denies his liability on the follow-grounds:—

1st.—Because he is a Mussulman and has been circumcised.

2nd.—Because he behaved with exemplary loyalty in the disturbances in 1857, in support of which he files the originals of certificates from the Commissioner of the division.

3rd.—Because in a suit brought by one Gunnee Lall, for the recovery of the purchase-money of certain villages, he is not described in the plaint as a shareholder.

4th.—Because in seven other suits all brought subsequently to the period at which it is stated by the plaintiff he became a shareholder, he is not described as such either in the plaint or in the decree of the court, or in any other document connected with the proceedings.

5th.—Because there is no entry in any of his (defendant's) books to show that he ever purchased shares or received any dividend.

6th.—That on the day on which it is alleged he made an application for the shares he was away at his brother's wedding at a place thirty miles distant from Budgepore, and did not return for a week.

7th.—That he had to defray the expenses of his brother's wedding, and was not in funds to purchase shares.

8th.—That the plaintiff has not adduced reliable evidence to establish his liability.

At the first hearing of the case, the following issues were drawn.

1st.—Is the defendant as he alleges a Mahomedan, and how does that affect his liability?

2nd.—Is the defendant the person alluded to in the certificate of loyalty in 1857?

3rd.—If the facts as stated in the 3rd and 4th pleas are correct, in what way do they affect defendant's liability?

4th.—Similarly what is the effect of the allegations, in paras, 5, 6 and 7 of the defendant's statement, and are the facts as there stated?

5th.—Has the plaintiff adduced satisfactory proofs of defendant's liability?

At the second hearing of this case, both parties being represented by their respective pleaders, the evidence was recorded.

As the 5th issue lays the burden of proof upon the plaintiff, it will not be necessary to enter into a consideration of the evidence on the other issues until this has been disposed of.

The plaintiff ought to have produced vouchers for his statement, but he accounts for the absence of this all-important evidence by the fact of the documents having all been destroyed by

white ants. These insects, it is true, are very destructive, and particularly so in Budgepore. And although it is quite possible that valuable records should be destroyed in this manner, because it is known that white ants' destructive faculties are indiscriminately applied, that insect not being able to distinguish between what are and what are not valuable documents, yet it is a very remarkable coincidence indeed that in this case the ants should have made a selection of documents and devoured only those which were applicable to this case. There is no exception to be taken to the parol evidence which the plaintiff has adduced. Three witnesses of the utmost respectibility depose to having seen the defendant write the letter forwarding the application for the shares. Three others of equal respectability depose to having seen the application received and entered in the register, and the scrip signed and dispatched in accordance with the application. These witnesses are all native clerks in the service of the plaintiffs, for the rejection of whose testimony no good reason has been adduced by the defendant. The most conclusive evidence of all is that of witness No. 7, who deposes to having seen the white ants in the act of destroying the very documents alluded to. Witness No. 8 says he himself dispatched the various sums which it is alleged were paid to defendant as

dividends on his shares; but he does not produce the receipt, for the same reason that the other vouchers were not forthcoming, viz., because they were devoured by the white ants along with the other papers. The defendant seeks to impugn the veracity of the plaintiffs' witnesses on the ground that in the course of his business as money-lender or banker the plaintiffs' witnesses have become indebted to him, and he has at various times sued them at law and got decrees against them.

Although I do not consider that the defendant has succeeded in his attempt to impugn the testimony of these witnesses, yet as I consider that the plaintiffs were bound to put the vouchers in a place where white ants could not reach them, and that the production of them (the vouchers) is necessary to support the plaintiffs' case, and as they have not been produced, I shall dismiss the claim.

The decree will carry costs.

Signed,

BASIL MOOLTAWEE,
Judge.

CHRONICLE XI.

THE BUDGEPORE POLITICAL AGENCY.

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THE BUDGEPORE POLITICAL AGENCY.

CHAPTER I.

A THING OF BEAUTY IS A JOY FOR EVER.

THE English reader will not see anything worthy of remark in the heading of this chapter, but the Indian will immediately say to himself, "Political agency of Budgepore! How comes there to be a political agency there"?

But there really was a political agency at Budgepore. And this is how there was one. I have already chronicled the political history of Budgepore, and traced its destinies from Warren Hasting's time downwards. The Nawab of Budgepore was still an independent prince. The capital and palace were situated about twenty-seven miles from the military and civil station and the native city of Budgepore. But the whole province went by this name.

The political agency was an average one in point of emolument, and a very desirable and coveted appointment it was. It was at the time I write held by Captain Kummakl. Kummakl was the son and grandson of two old Bengal civilians. The family name was Carmichael, but the natives always pronounced it Kummakl, and the grandfather, after he retired from the service, wishing to perpetuate the fond associations that gilded the horizon of his memory in the sunset of his days, left all his money to his son on condition that he should change the family name to Kummakl. There were several of the family in the different services, and Captain Lionel Kummakl was, as I have said, political agent of Budgepore. He lived in one of the Nawab's palaces, and a very beautiful residence it was, in the centre of a large garden which bordered on a lake. In the middle of the lake there was an island partly natural and partly artificial, in which stood the picturesque ruins of an ancient Hindoo temple, whose rugged edges of brown stone peeped here and there from underneath the foliage of the peepul tree and the luxuriant creepers that almost overwhelmed it in their embrace. There was a boat on the lake, and plenty of good fishing and good shooting in the neighbourhood. You will say Kummakl ought to have been happy in such a place. And so he would have been but for one

thing. He was like Adam alone in Paradise—he sighed for an Eve to keep him company, and enjoy life with him.

Julia Congreve was the prettiest girl that ever came to India. This is saying a good deal, I allow, and I have reflected a moment whether I ought not to qualify the assertion. But when I recall to mind her figure, her exquisitely shaped head and hands, her dark grey eyes, "fringed," as a novel writer would say, but it is more philosophical to call it "protected" by long eyelashes, her complexion, which Madame Rachel might have taken for a model; not sickly white, but pure and translucent, like alabaster, coloured with nature's loveliest tint which she has given to the rose and reproduced in the bloom of youth and beauty; I say when I recall this image to my memory I find no reason to modify my statement, sweeping though it is. In this brief allusion to a few out of her many charms, I must not forget her hair. In those days that peculiar tint of ladies' hair which was lately in fashion and has now gone out, was not generally admired. I have heard monsters with no taste and no eye for the beautiful speak slightingly of her hair and call it red. Red! well, it was red in the same sense that that deep golden-tinted cloud at sunset all glowing amid a blaze of rosy light may be called red. What

would you think of the man who pointed to such a sunset scene and remarked, "Look at that red cloud?" Why, you would feel the same as I felt when I heard men remark on Julia's hair and call it red. She was just seventeen when she first came to India. Her father was a civilian, and at the age of five Julia had been sent home to school. Her mother died a year after, and Julia remained at school and under charge of her friends till she was sixteen and a half, during which time she had never seen her father, and then came out to India. He was not at Budgepore, but she was then on a visit at her aunt's, Mrs. Mooltawee, who was a good woman enough, but rather too fond of match-making. The night after Julia's arrival there was a ball, and she made her first appearance in the Budgepore world on that occasion. Her beauty was striking anywhere, how much more when enhanced by the accomplishments of an elegant and tasty toilet. Ah, me! what havoc she made among the hearts of bachelors. Poor Kummakl was there. I don't know why I should call him poor, except for the condition in which he went home that night after dancing twice with Julia. He had to return next day to the Agency, but he managed to find time to call at Mrs. Mooltawee's and there he saw Julia more beautiful, if possible, in her simple

morning attire of glistening white than in all the glories of white satin and lace flounces. Her manner was perfection, her conversation sprightly and cheerful, and Kummakl returned to his solitary palace in the garden by the lake in a mood bordering on distraction. He thought to himself what bliss it would be to see that fairy creature seated opposite to him at the dinner table, to see her in the drawing-room, to hear her light foot-fall on the carpet and the rustling of her dress, to ride with her, to walk in the garden with her, to gather flowers for her, to row her on the lake, to be her slave, in short, and wait upon her everywhere from morning to night. It seemed to him as if his palace would be a palace, indeed, graced by the presence of an angel.

When a man is addicted to intellectual pursuits, or immersed in business, that all day long absorbs the utmost powers of his mind, a fit of love may do him no harm; on the contrary, it may do him a great deal of good. But love is fed by fancy, and lives on imagination. A very busy man, as Bulwer somewhere remarks, has not time to be in love. Now Kummakl was not a busy man. Few political agents are, and if they are, it is generally in doing mischief, and then trying to undo it. A political agent of long experience, much longer experience than any of the political agents of the present

day can boast of, once remarked to me, in reply to an observation that So and So did nothing, that that was best the thing he could do. And that had reference to a critical time, too. How Kummakl's fit of love would have ended I don't know. He might have drowned himself in the lake, or shot himself; he was just mad enough for either, till one day the idea struck him, why not marry Julia? That would be better than killing himself out of love for her, or dying by inches. He looked round at the handsome suite of apartments in which he lived, and thought that with a little outlay, they might be made worthy of such a goddess. Then he got up and looked at himself in the glass; and that did not dissatisfy him. He was a good-looking fellow enough, tall, well-built, with dark hair, and a neat moustache. What, if Julia could be brought to love him one tithe, one millionth part as much as he loved her! The thought was maddening, but the idea after simmering in his excited brain for half an hour, resulted in a call for his servant.

"Pack up my things," he said: "I shall go to-morrow morning into Budgepore, and remain there——a week—no, a fortnight, perhaps more."

On reaching Budgepore, Kummakl went and called on Mrs. Dakhil Duftar, who was a great friend of his, and took her into his confidence,

Ms. Dakhil Duftar was delighted to be consulted in a love affair, what lady is not? and entered into the thing with much interest. Her advice was consolatory to Kummakl's feelings.

"Why should not you try, Captain Kummakl? Julia 's a sweetly pretty girl and well educated, and will I daresay look a little high, but I don't see why you should not succeed. You've a capital appointment, and live at a delightful place;—it is true I know her aunt wants her to marry in the service, but I don't think in your case that would be an insuperable objection. You are not so good as a district, but much better than a joint.* I advise you to try. There are a good many already in the field, I hear, Isteefa for one, but he has no chance. Julia can't bear him. Don't be too shy. Faint heart, you know, never wins fair lady; and don't be too spooney, girls like Julia don't like men to be too spooney."

"I'll try," said Kummakl, getting up to go; "many thanks, for you have quite encouraged me. You'll keep my secret, won't you?"

"Oh, yes; you may depend on me. Good bye and good luck."

Captain Kummakl needn't have made a point

* I must explain that a magistrate and collector in charge of a district draws upwards of two thousand rupees a month; a joint, or joint magistrate, the grade below, from seven hundred to a thousand.

about his secret, as he called it, being kept. He was an honorary member of the 159th mess, and always dined there when in cantonments. After he left that night there was a good deal of betting whether Kummakl, Isteefa, or which of the half-a-dozen others who were well known to be running for Julia's hand would be successful. Kummakl was the favourite. After some further discussion, a gold mohur lottery was proposed and forthwith started. Captain Spot, who drew Kummakl, sold him for five gold mohurs the minute after to Blackburn, who had drawn Isteefa, and Blackburn got ten gold mohurs for the two the next day.

In India society lives pretty much in a glass house, and as making love forms a part of most men's lives, they enjoy the unenviable privilege of making love in glass houses. Alexis fancies that his *penchant* for Lucinda is a secret—when there are fifty pairs of eyes watching his talking to her at the first ball, and when he rides up to her carriage at the band, Lucinda's less favoured admirers make way for him, and leave them together as a matter of course. Two doves that sit together cooing on the branch of a tree in the open face of heaven, in no deeper seclusion than that afforded by the somewhat scanty foliage of the surrounding branches, enjoy as much privacy as you, when you offer the lady of your love in an Indian drawing-room those

little attentions which are construed into intended matrimony.

This may be an uncomfortable reflection for those who have a reputation or wish to gain a reputation for being wiser than their fellow men. Some statesman, I think it was Sir Robert Peel, said it was as impossible for a tax to be popular as for a man in love to be wise. I suppose it is a law of nature that the proportion between the two should be maintained everywhere. For if the difficulty of discovering a popular tax in India is tenfold greater than in England, it is certainly ten times as difficult to make love in that country and throw a veil of privacy over an amiable weakness as it is at home.

Next day Kummakl called. Julia was there in the drawing-room looking more lovely than ever. He prolonged the morning call as long as he could with decency, asked permission to accompany the ladies in their morning ride, and took his departure.

Mrs. Mooltawee had a dinner party that evening, but Kummakl had not been invited. I dare say he would have been if he had been in Budgepore when the invitations were sent out, or even if Mrs. Mooltawee had known he was coming in; but then he had come in so suddenly, and not told any one of his intention. So he dined at mess and was moody and ab-

stracted all the evening, and went home early, when he sat for full two hours in the verandah smoking a great many more cigars than were good for him, and thinking of Julia, how she looked in the carriage at the band when he had exchanged a few words with her, her bonnet, her ribbons, her gloves, her dress, and how she was probably dressed at that very moment while Kummakl was sitting in the verandah with his legs up against the pillar dreaming of her. I say dreaming, for it was nothing else. How she looked at the band he had a sort of right to dwell upon, for it was a *bonâ fide* exercise of memory, but as to how she was dressed for the evening was a matter Kummakl had no business at all to reason about, because he had no better data to go upon than most members when they bring a bill into council; that is he took for granted his facts, grounded on some general ideas about ladies' dress, and drew his conclusions, being perfectly satisfied, because he had only himself to satisfy as to their correctness. And was Julia thinking of Kummakl? I am afraid not. The standing programme, with all the young butterflies who hovered round her, and burnt off their legs and wings, seemed to be ceaseless merriment. They were always saying funny things—at least they were always laughing. How they found so much to laugh about at Budgepore I cannot

imagine. I think Julia must have been very tired of all this when night came, and she laid her pretty head upon her pillow. But then Julia's intellectual education had not been thought very much of. You, see, she was brought up at one of the first schools for young ladies. She was taught every possible accomplishment, from music and painting to getting into a carriage gracefully—and out. A carriage was brought twice a week in the afternoon to the door of Miss Minim's seminary and the young ladies of the head class went through the lesson, a branch of education deemed so important that Miss Minim, who delegated most of the other branches to assistants, superintended this herself. She stood just by the carriage door, which was held open by a footman in gorgeous livery, who preserved, all the time, a countenance as solemn as if he was looking down into the graves of each young lady as she tripped up the carriage steps. One after another, dressed as for a drive, they came out of the hall door, advanced to the carriage steps, put their little feet gracefully upon them, attending all the time to Miss Minim's instructions as to adjustment of dress, position of hands and every movement, like a soldier going through the old fashioned manual and platoon. Each young lady had to seat herself in the carriage, and then go through the reverse process of coming down again.

After it was all over Miss Minim used to go out a drive, taking with her one of the governesses, or one of the young ladies who had earned a claim to this distinction by superior gracefulness of deportment.

Julia learnt to write a delicate, ladylike hand and to read; she learnt a little geography and a little arithmetic as far as addition. French, of course, and enough Italian to be able to pronounce properly the words of Italian songs, and to know their meaning—when they had any. She learnt to dance, of course, and took lessons in riding, and when these and other minor contributory accomplishments were mastered, her education was completed. On Sunday, the young ladies went to church once in the morning, where Miss Minim had two long pews in the very centre of the aisle of St. Bonavia's, the fashionable church. The afternoon was spent in walking about the garden in summer in twos and threes, talking generally about their love affairs, real or imaginary. In winter the girls crowded over the fires in their rooms and talked on the same subject. The religious instruction imparted to the minds of her pupils by Miss Minim consisted in a chapter of Mrs. Trimmer's annotations, which she read every evening at prayer time. The curate of the parish, Mr. Mildmay, had made one or two advances in proposing to attend at stated times

and give the young ladies religious instruction. But Miss Minim did not see the matter in the same light at all as Mr. Mildmay, and resolutely kept the young priest at arms length. She did her duty, did Miss Minim. She professed to give her young ladies the best and most accomplished education, and she did so. She did not undertake to give instruction in Latin and Greek or mathematics. If parents wished their daughters to learn such things as these, they must send them to some inferior establishment.

Miss Minim's institution was intended only for young ladies of position; she undertook to bring them up so that they could be ornaments to society, and I only wish every professor in the world succeeded in doing what they undertake to do as well as Miss Minim. That lady used to boast that she knew the world; and I think she did not overrate herself in this respect. "I don't care so much," she used to say, "about a girl's looks. Of course, it is all the better if she is good looking, but nice, lady-like manners and a graceful bearing in a drawing-room, and good taste in dress go further in society a great deal than mere beauty of features."

"Go further in society,"—that was the standard Miss Minim worked up to. That was her rule of life, as it were,—the high

water mark of her principles and her designs. That there was any other object in education never for one instant crossed her mind. There is one advantage in not setting one's self a very high standard, namely, that you can the more easily attain to it; and Miss Minim perfected her scholars, whereas, had she set herself to train them for immortality, possibly she might not have succeeded so well.

Beings like Julia Congreve really seem as if they were born exceptions to the conditions under which the human race comes into the world, as if the curse, passed upon Adam and his posterity, did not reach them. As soon as she was born, she had two servants besides her mother to attend to every babyish caprice. When a little older, her two servants were increased to three, to thirty in fact, for every member of her father's somewhat numerous household vied in devotion to the little girl. When she went to England she lived with an aunt, who had no children of her own, and so doted on the little Julia, who was a queen without the cares of state, from her very birth. Having naturally a gentle disposition, never tried or crossed by the exactions of elder brothers or sisters, she never gave occasion for any chastisement harsher than a gentle rebuke. And when she went to school, she fell under Miss Minim's principles of education for young

ladies, viz., that refinement, and ease, and grace of manner were incompatible with labour of any kind. Up to the age of eighteen she never knew a care more weighty than the selection of a ball dress. A hard or unkind word had never met her ear, or been addressed to her. She did not know her mother, and therefore her death was no cause of real grief to her young mind. Her aunt, with whom she was living when that event occurred, felt a mother's kindness for her, and saw no reason why she should cause her young idol's tears to flow for a loss which could only be brought home to her by the aid of imagination, and forbore to dwell upon the reality of the loss to Julia. Her path of life from the very cradle, was, as if it were strewn with flowers,—with flowers that bear no thorns. Compare the existence of such an one with the lot of the sons and daughters of toil and care, and say whether they do not appear to belong to different races.

Kummakl couldn't sit in his verandah dreaming of Julia all night, so, although the subject to his somewhat narrow mind was by no means exhausted, he gave it up and went to bed, to continue his dream in the land of sleep. But he awoke an hour before daylight, and looked at his watch. He was determined to be early at Mrs. Mooltawee's, for there might be some other fellows there bent on the same

errand as himself, and he was resolved to have the pleasure of assisting Julia to mount her horse. He had planned that little plot the night before—indeed he had dwelt upon all the contingencies connected with it for full three-quarters of an hour. Such elastic things our minds are. We can contract them to the smallest dimensions, that the veriest trifle can fill the whole area of the mental vision, or expand them to take in an idea of infinity. And a man's mind does contract a good deal when he is under the influence of any passion, for then the minutest point, no bigger than a pin's head, will swell and swell like Satyavrata's fish, till it fills the whole field of view. Kummakl was up and dressed, and had had his cup of coffee, and yet it wanted half-an-hour of gunfire, which means a little after daylight. He waited till the gun fired, and then, afraid that after all he should be late, cantered along to Mrs. Mooltawee's. Here he found no sign of any one stirring, so he gave his horse to the syce and walked about the garden, looking at his watch every two minutes. A quarter-of-an hour passed before the ladies' horses were brought round, and then he came up a little nearer the house. Then an ayah made her appearance, walking leisurely across from the servants'-huts, and disappeared inside a bathing room door. He wondered whether that was

her ayah, and his heart began to warm towards the woman, as if she were a priestess consecrated to the service of his goddess. I venture to say if a genii—a jin, more correctly speaking—had appeared at that moment, and offered to change his identity with that of the ayah's, Kummakl's destiny in the world would have seemed a cheap price to pay for the bargain. He was thinking of this when another ayah appeared, and he didn't know which was Julia's, and he laughed as he thought how the genii might have taken him in. Another half hour passed, when a light step and a rustle of a lady's dress made him look up, and he beheld Mrs. Mooltawee in her riding habit. Julia had a headache, she said, that morning, and was not going out. Ah, poor Kummakl! All the fabric he had been twining through so many hours, turned out to be made of gossamer thread after all, and broken up at once!

Mrs. Mooltawee, however, saw his disappointment, and asked him to come to tiffin, and she thought Julia perhaps would like to ride in the evening. So Kummakl's hopes revived with the idea of a *tête-a-tête* ride, and he was cheerful and companionable enough; and when he assisted Mrs. Mooltawee to dismount at the door on their return, she thought he would not be so bad a match for Julia after all.

I have always heard, for I am obliged to speak on these matters from the experience of others, that when a man who has been very much in love gets married, he feels an immense relief, like a ship long tossed on tumultuous seas,—he is in harbour at last. No more toiling and watching, no more waiting for an hour or two for the chance of a look, an opportunity for a word, an occasion for some petty, trifling service, too ludicrously trifling to be described; no more anxious hours and sleepless nights, no more plunges into the depths of despair because a passing shade crosses the features of your lady-love. If your whole happiness and peace of mind for a day, or a week, or a month, is liable to be destroyed by a cross word or a cold look, it is obvious that your happiness stands on very unstable ground. When you are once married, all this fever and anxiety are at an end. A cross word or a cold look does not then signify so much—there is time to heal the wound, or let the cloud pass away. So that I think our Indian code, I do not mean the Penal Code, but the code of Indian social law is very merciful, for it shortens materially the period of trial a lover has to undergo. Kummakl had danced twice with Julia, had exchanged a few words in a morning call, and fewer still at the band; he had been one *tête-a-tête* ride with her, had helped her once on her horse, and once to

dismount. The next time he saw her was at a large evening party at Mrs. Mooltawee's the day after the ride, when he inveigled her into the verandah, and there by moonlight took her hand, as if he was touching the hand of a being of a superior order from himself, and told her of his love. She withdrew her hand, but manifested no displeasure. She neither said "yes" or "no," but rather sternly, as he thought for her, desired to go inside. He offered his arm in silence, and led her in. Just as they crossed the threshold, they confronted Mrs. Mooltawee, and Kummakl, whose sense of perception was wound up to an inconceivable pitch of acuteness, augured well from a glance which Julia gave her aunt, and which the latter returned with the rapidity of an electric spark.

While the weighty question which Kummakl had put remained unanswered, he felt it was impossible to hold any kind of conversation with Julia, and as the silence was irksome beyond measure, he led her to a seat, and returned to the verandah alone, for he felt as if the eyes of every one in the room were upon him; a great mistake, for no one probably was even thinking of him at the time.

As he was standing alone gazing out on the scene before him, bathed in the splendour of an Indian moonlight, he felt a light touch on his

arm. He looked round, and Mrs. Mooltawee stood beside him.

"So you have proposed to my niece?" she said.

"Did she tell you? Yes, I have. Oh I do so hope you will all consent," said Kummakl incoherently.

"Her father must be written to. I don't suppose he will object. I don't."

"And she?"

"I do not think she will say no."

"This was not very decisive, but it raised Kummakl to the seventh heaven. He pressed Mrs. Mooltawee's hand in silent gratitude, and she left him with a smile. His eyes followed her as she went in, and soon sought out Julia. There she was, chattering and laughing with a young fellow of the 159th, as if there was very little weighing on her mind. Kummakl's heart sank for a moment, as the idea crossed him, "Is that the woman to whom I have just made an offer of marriage, and she doesn't seem to consider it worth thinking about? But then she is such an angel."

Kummakl had the good sense to feel that he was not fit company for any one but himself, and slipped out of the room quietly and went home.

"Well, my dear, you know he has eighteen hundred a month," said Mrs. Dakhil Duftar to

Mrs. Mooltawee apologetically, as the two ladies were exchanging a few words on the subject of the offer.

"Yes, but the military pensions are so bad."

"Well, I confess I should have preferred a district for Julia, still, you know, she might have done worse: she might have fallen in love with one of those young officers."

"I don't think Julia will ever fall in love," was Mrs. Mooltawee's reply. "Good night."

"Good night."

CHAPTER II.

WE ALL HAVE OUR WEAK POINTS.

So they were married. Some philosophers will tell you that hopes fufilled are never equal to the anticipation. In Kummakl's case it certainly was not, as I don't suppose any man could have been happier than he was. His brightest dreams had all come to pass. There was Julia, the goddess enthroned in the very shrine he had built for her. There was he, the worshipper, with the being he worshipped for his own, and, as it seemed, no cloud in the sky to darken the sunlight of his bliss. As for Julia, the destiny to which she seemed born continued to attend her, the pathway of her life was strewn with flowers as it had ever been. She had a beautiful house in a beautiful spot; she had a *boudoir* exquisitely furnished with every artificial luxury that an upholsterer's skill could supply. She had her music and her painting and her embroidery. Her husband

was her devoted slave, too loving to bore her with attentions, but ever ready to gratify her slightest whim, to read to her, to ride with her, to walk in the garden with her, and gather flowers for her, to row her on the lake. She had the newest novels, they were the only sort of literature for which her education had given her a taste, and as much society as she wanted, as her Budgepore friends were always glad to come out to spend a day whenever she asked them, and the Nawab's carriages and horses were always at her disposal to bring them out and send them back. She was still a queen as she always had been all her life: every creature that came near her seemed but too glad to do her the slightest service, and she accepted it all with a kindness and grace of manner that captivated every heart.

And here I find myself face to face with a matter which no chronicler of Indian social history can shirk. He may avoid it, or pass it by for a time, but sooner or later it is sure to force itself upon him. Here were two human beings, Lionel and Julia, who knew no more of each other's character than you do of the man who brushes by you in the Strand on your way to the city; yet they had sworn before the altar to live together as man and wife till death should part them. Now it is no use to pretend to ignore the fact, it is undeniable, and forces

itself on our attention every day we read the papers or listen to what goes on around us, that in spite of marriage vows, something a long way short of death does very often interfere to sever the union of Indian married life. And the majority of those who consider the subject, account for it by the tropical rapidity with which courtship ripens into matrimony. In former days, it was the common thing for a man, if he heard there was a nice girl at a neighbouring station, to get leave between musters, that is, leave for thirty days, go over, see her, speak to her, dance with her, make an offer and marry her. Sometimes he would complete it all in the one month. At others, he would put it off, and get another thirty days' leave a month or two later, and then go and get married. Nowadays, "leave between musters" is out of fashion, but in nine cases out of ten, your Indian marriages are consummated between people who venture their life's happiness upon the most superficial acquaintance of the one whom they make their life's partner. Of course I shall be called cynical, and the opinion will be put down to the withering of the heart's affections under the blighting influence of the disappointed hopes that have left me an old bachelor. But, like Diogenes, I can study from my tub the manners and customs of other men who do not live in tubs. And I

believe that our Indian social laws have been blamed for that for which they are not answerable. Marriage is a lottery, and out of a thousand men and women who do marry, not ten know each other's character before they speak the vows that bind them indissolubly together.

If the marriage is one of convenience, as many in the highest circles of society at home are, there is, of course, little or no attempt to read character. Among the middle classes in England and society generally in India, such marriages are less common, for they are contracts between parties who put wealth against rank, and in India there is little or none of either. On the other hand, our marriages are generally made between persons of mature age, whose characters are formed. But love is proverbially blind, and no wonder, for lovers, when together, wear a mask. And neither will discover the true features underneath the mask, no matter whether the courtship lasts for one month or for twenty. No, the unhappy fatality that attends so many Indian marriages is not to be attributed to the brevity of courtship. It it attributable to the habit, in so many cases a necessity that necessity is always taken for granted, of frequent temporary separations between man and wife, and the tone and habits of society in our modern Capuas. No more

fatal lesson can be learnt by a wedded pair than that the society of one is not necessary to the happiness of the other. When Alexis and Lucinda have once discovered that they can do without one another, the chain that binds them together is reduced to one link, the social, or moral obligation to observe the marriage vows, and the extent to which that obligation is recognised varies not only in different people, but at different times in the same person.

The natives about the agency admired Julia with a sort of distant veneration. They were never tired of extolling her beauty, and the Nawab of Budgepore heard so much about her that he fell desperately in love on hearsay, as the princes in the Arabian Nights and the Bagh-o-bahar always do with princesses they have never seen. Though he would willingly have given up half his revenues for a Begum like her, he felt it was out of the question his ever possessing one, but he knew that a fresh element had been introduced into the machinery of the agency, and like a wise man he began to turn over the matter in his mind, and ponder upon the method by which it might be used to his advantage.

No European can form the smallest idea of the extent to which the whole life of the Asiatic is made up of intrigue. From the bottom to the top of the social ladder it is the

same. Your servants spend all their spare time in intriguing to get a larger share of your favour, and outdo their fellows. They will plot, and plan, and scheme for a whole year to get some member of your large household dismissed and another installed in his place, a relative, a friend, perhaps a creditor. What appears to you a mere trifle not worth a minute's thought, a native will willingly spend days and weeks upon, and think the time well spent if he succeed. And if you like to see how the principle holds good in the highest walks in Asiatic life, read Indian history, and there you will find how the whole of it is nothing but a record of intrigues commencing with diplomatic scheming and ending in war. To displace a favourite, to dethrone a reigning prince, to subvert a dynasty, were the ends and aims of statesmen and warriors in former days. Dethroning princes and subverting dynasties are matters now generally beyond the compass of either diplomacy or war. But the very same love of intrigue, though confined to limits where the results are necessarily less apparent than they were before British power became predominant, still finds a vent, and is as actively indulged in now that the prize is comparatively small, as it was in the days of Akbar and Aurungzebe.

The prime minister, or dewan, as he was

called at Budgepore in the days I am writing about, was a Hindoo, by name Dowlut Rao. He had been installed as dewan before Kummakl's time by his predecessor, the man who was dewan before him, a Mahomedan noble named Mustaffa Khan, having been displaced to make room for a successful rival. For Mustaffa Khan had got into disgrace with the former political agent, who procured his dismissal and the installation of Dowlut Rao.

But an Asiatic takes all such instances of the ups and downs of life very stoically. He knew he had been out-witted. He had made a series of bad moves, and was checked for the time, but not checkmated. There was only one power that could checkmate him, and that was the angel of death, and there had been no summons from that quarter, so that it was clear that fate intended he should one day reverse the order of things and check, perhaps checkmate, his rival in his turn.

The Nawab, who hated Dowlut Rao, and against whose will Mustaffa Khan had been turned out, was quite ready to intrigue to get the latter back again, and, indeed, Kummakl's chief duties lay in thwarting the efforts which the Nawab was incessantly making to get his favourite reinstated.

All sorts of accusations were sent to the Political Agent against Dowlut Rao, and backed

up by the Nawab. But Kummakl was duly instructed from the Foreign office how to deal with these attempts, and to thwart every effort of the Nawab and Mustaffa Khan's party. Mustaffa Khan had tried to poison Dowlut Rao, and Dowlut Rao had tried to poison Mustaffa Khan. The most crafty and deep-laid plots were set on foot to embroil Dowlut Rao with the British Agent, and the most crafty and deep-laid schemes were set on foot to bring Mustaffa Khan somehow or other within reach of the criminal law. But beyond an incessant bubbling at the surface, these attempts produced no real fermentation in the social element at Budgepore. So matters had been going on ever since Kummakl had taken up the reins of office. He, of course, could no more vie with the authors of all these intrigues in subtlety and cunning, than he could have ventured in competing with a pearl-diver for the treasures of the deep. Both parties in turn tried to make him their tool, and both failed, simply because a certain amount of common sense and English straightforwardness, or as an Asiatic would call it, English obtuseness and want of subtlety, kept him from being made a tool of either. Had he laid himself open to be bribed by money by either party, he might have made a fortune long ago. But he had not been long enough there for the

natives to have sounded his character to the bottom. They were a little uncertain about him. The very deficiencies in his character puzzled them, and they had none of them dared to venture on the dangerous experiment of a bribe, and as he, of course never suggested anything of the kind, he had never been subjected to the temptation.

Now, however, a new element altogether was introduced into the complex machinery. Kummakl was the slave of his wife, she was a woman, and if she was to be won, the party that won her would be sure of victory. But how to win so unapproachable a creature? That was the theme that many wise heads and subtle minds spent whole days in pondering upon, after Julia had been a month at the Budgepore Political Agency.

Meantime the subordinates attached to the Agency had a fine time of it. The head clerk, whose name was Cynthea Jones, was subsidized by both parties. He received a hundred rupees a month from Dowlut Rao to secure his influence in his interest, and another from Mustaffa Khan to bind him to his, besides *dalies*, or presents, from each of the noblemen on every Hindoo holiday from the one, and on every Mahomedan holiday from the other. These *dalies*, as they are called, consisted chiefly of vegetables and sweetmeats, cakes, &c., but

there was always a gold mohur, or two, neatly wrapped up either in a bunch of plantains or tomatas. Besides this the Nawab, who was not above securing his services, made him handsome presents about twice in the year, taking good care, of course, not to let his minister know of the subsidy. But Cynthea Jones was not the only man who profited considerably by the state of politics at Budgepore. There was not a servant attached to Kummakl's household, as long as he was a bachelor, who did not receive a gratuity equivalent to his pay from each of the rival factions, for each servant individually represented to the servants, respectively of Dowlut Rao and Mustaffa Khan, that he was in high favour with his master, and could influence him by a word dropped into his ear now and again.

When Julia came and it was seen what influence she possessed, you may easily imagine how anxious the contending parties were to hit upon some scheme either to get access to her or to secure her interest, if it were possible. Mustaffa Khan in this matter exhibited the greatest ability or capacity for intrigue, which in an Asiatic passes for ability. He in thinking over the matter, came to the conclusion that if it was too high a flight of ambition to aim at the mistress, the next best thing was to secure the maid. And so as Julia had two ayahs, an

upper and a lower lady's maid, and as the upper one was, as is usually the case, a Mahomedan woman, he soon set the Nawab on the scent, and the result was overtures of friendship from the women servants in the Nawab's household. If among the Asiatics the male sex look upon intrigue as one of the main objects of life, the female live but to intrigue. Their capacity for it is something marvellous. The tenacity of purpose, the skill and cunning with which they weave the fine web of their plots and schemes, even about the merest trifle, is an interesting study in the book of human nature. Perhaps this characteristic is not confined to the Asiatic woman only. I have met with English women almost as fond of the pursuit, but compared with their Aryan sisters they are but clumsy operators. The ayah was not long in understanding how the land lay, and you may be sure she was not slow in turning it to good account. It soon became a common thing for her to spend some portion of every day in the Nawab's seraglio.

Every man has a weak point somewhere in his character, for every human being is open to flattery. There are many kinds of flattery. I do not mean by flattery, necessarily, the application of coarse butter by a clumsy hand, a dull Bœotian sounding of a man's praises in his presence or his ear. But there are other sorts

of flattery, consisting of the discovery of the weak points of the character, and a skilful playing with them when found. Many of the greatest minds are subject to some petty vanity, such as you might, indeed, be prepared to find in a girl just fresh from school, but which you are surprised to meet with in a philosopher, a poet, or a statesman.

And as the weak point may be manipulated by flattery, so it may be made to secure a purpose by the opposite treatment. If the skilful flatterer can discover the small aperture between the joints of the harness where he may reach the skin, you may be sure a subtle enemy will be able pretty nearly always to find a similar place where he may wound. Kummakl was like other men. He was certainly not above the average in intellect, and I do not know but in this respect he was very much below it. He had a weak point like the rest of us, and a weak point very curiously situated. Frederick Schlegel, it is said, was so vain of his features that he had a little mirror inside the lid of his snuff-box wherein he was fond of contemplating the reflection of his face even while lecturing. Kummakl's weak point—you may smile as you read it, but can you lay your hand on your heart, my friend, and say you have no similar little vanity—was his feet. He was excessively, inordinately, ludicrously vain about

his feet. I can't tell you how many pairs of boots and shoes he had not collected in his dressing room. If you do not believe me, ask his bootmaker how much his yearly account for boots and shoes amounted to. When a man has a weak point like this, of course, all those who live with him and about him become aware of it. Do you think your native servants do not know your pet particular weakness? Why, it is the subject of constant discussion with them, and many a joke is made at your expense on the basis of it, in the kitchen.

Of course Julia soon found out her husband's little foible, but it was a very harmless one indeed, and it amused her to watch its occasional development. One morning, about three months after their marriage, she was walking with him in the garden; arm in arm they were sauntering down the path, pausing every now and then to gather flowers and chatting pleasantly, when something caused Julia to stop a few seconds. Ere they continued their walk, she burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing about, Julia?" asked her husband.

"A very absurd idea crossed my mind just at the moment, some nonsense my ayah told me this morning, as she was doing my hair. I encourage the girl in tittle tattle, it amuses me, and your attitude just this moment 'Li,' (she

always called him 'Li,') reminded me of something the silly girl said to me this morning—it is too absurd to repeat, really."

"Never mind if it made you laugh—in connection with me too, and has evidently created an impression of some sort in your mind; you may as well tell me, it will make me laugh too, perhaps."

"Well, she said,—you know she gets together with the women servants in the Nawab's palace, and Dowlut Rao's women go there too, and they all talk scandal and nonsense, as women will, and she retails a great deal of it to me. They say that Dowlut Rao makes a joke about your being vain about your feet, Li—what do you think of that? you know I think it *is* a little *wee bit* true—now confess, isn't it?"

"Pish, what stuff, Julia, you do listen to," said Kummakl, pretending to treat the trifle with the scorn it deserved. They neither of them alluded to the subject again, but Julia had to put a little extra force into her winning ways, ere she could chase away the cloud that that laugh of hers, and the remarks it called forth, had conjured up.

When a man has some of the petty little vanities or conceits I have spoken of, or the weak point the flatterer or the enemy may aim at, nothing galls him so much as to have it exposed and ridiculed. If Kummakl had had

any work to do that absorbed his attention, or really occupied his mind; it is certain the disagreeable feeling occasioned by this trifling incident would have been speedily obliterated. As it was, he had nothing the least engrossing to take up his attention. His mornings were generally spent in reading aloud some novel to Julia, and if he had any work, it was nothing more than casting his eyes over the copy of some letter, comparing it with the draft, and signing it. Perhaps once or twice a week he had an hour's work in his office, but not more. This morning Julia happened to be engaged in something else, and did not want to be read to, and Kummakl spent the time in walking up and down the verandah, thinking, brooding rather, over the slight put upon him by Dowlut Rao, in making him the common talk of menials in his own or other households. When you take a trifling annoyance or a petty wrong to your bosom, and cherish it with the warmth of your concentrated attention, it is astonishing how it grows and grows till it assumes the most disproportionate dimensions. Any man in this way may make himself as miserable as he likes, and many men do make themselves very miserable. Kummakl did so, and not only that, but he made himself very angry too. And the poisoned shaft went on rankling in the wound, creating a festering sore that grew worse and

worse every minute. A man of stronger character would have taken out the arrow and laid it aside, and not have allowed his mind to dwell upon the matter, seeing how much it discomposed him. But Kummakl had not a very strong character, and his vanity was piqued.

He began from that moment to look on Dowlut Rao with an unfavourable eye. Everything he did or said, if susceptible of two interpretations, appeared to Kummakl's view in the light the least favourable to the minister. It is astonishing, when once you take a prejudice against a man, and what trifles will give rise to a prejudice we all know, how different an aspect everything that man has to do, in connection with you, begins to wear. Before you conceive the prejudice, every little fault or mistake he committed you would explain away or excuse. Now, however, under the influence of another feeling, you have no allowance to make for him. You judge him by another standard altogether. You hold him guilty before you try him, whereas before you held him innocent till you were convinced unmistakably of his guilt.

The most important events of our lives, may we not say even the most important events in history, frequently arise seemingly from the smallest and most insignificant cause. In the life of nations, as in the life of individuals,

events are so linked together, that you may often trace the chain all the way back to the occurrence out of which the change of a nation's destiny, or of an individual's whole character and fortunes arose. Most men, if they narrowly scan the past, will find that the great crisis in their lives was generally determined by some accident, as they call it, or some fortuitous circumstance, which they might have controlled had they been previously aware of its approach, or warned to be on their guard. It is a truth which is worth thinking about; that any day, you know not when, you may have to encounter some crisis, petty and insignificant perhaps at the time, which is nevertheless the turning-point of your life's fortunes.

It so happened that just as Kummakl had blown the smouldering fire till it made the kettle boil, and his feelings against Dowlut Rao were anything but charitable, a chuprassee appeared, and announced the very man himself. Now this was an unlucky accident! What brought Dowlut Rao there on that day, of all days in the week or month. He did not often visit Kummakl, not oftener than once perhaps in three weeks, unless Kummakl sent for him. What made him come to-day? I don't know, but I do know that in our every day life occurrences of this sort do very constantly happen, and this is one instance of what I have

just said, that any day we may, any one of us, be called unexpectedly to confront some seeming trifle, which is, nevertheless, destined to colour the whole future course of our destiny.

The reason of Dowlut Rao's visit was this, and Kummakl recollected it as he was going inside to receive his visitor. A short time before, the minister had requested Kummakl to give a berth in the agency office, then vacant, to a relation of his, and Kummakl had replied that, so far as he was concerned, he should be glad to recommend the appointment of Dowlut Rao's relative, but that he, Kummakl, had not the appointment in his gift, the patronage belonging to the head of the department. This was what Dowlut Rao had come about, and Kummakl, as he went inside, resolved in his heart that he would disappoint the man who had insulted him.

The interview began by Dowlut Rao thanking Kummakl for his recommendation of his nephew, which recommendation had been confirmed by Colonel Boozey, the Governor-General's Agent, when Kummakl cut him short by saying curtly, and, indeed, rudely, that he was very sorry that other arrangements had been made. Dowlut Rao at first did not understand him, and Kummakl repeated what he had said rather more curtly than before. The other replied, without exhibiting in his tone the slightest disturbance

of temper, that he was very sorry, because he had sent for his nephew all the way from Benares, and he was expected to arrive that very day, that he would not only thus be put to a great expense needlessly, but that, what was worse, he would be held up as a laughing stock to all his family: the respect in which he was held, his honour and reputation, (there is no exact English translation for the word *izzut*) was injured irrecoverably, and he hoped the Political Agent would rescind his decision.

Kummakl sat silent all through this little speech, and then replied as before, with a little asperity of temper. Dowlut Rao then rose to go, intimating, in the politest possible phraseology, that he was sorry for what had occurred, but he hoped Captain Kummakl would have no objection to the matter being referred to higher authority, which, considering that the appointment had to be confirmed by that higher authority, was reasonable enough.

It is not worth while to follow this matter out further. The reference indeed ended in Dowlut Rao's nephew being installed in the post in spite of Kummakl's opposition, but from that day forward there was a deadly feud between these two men.

It was about a fortnight after this that Kummakl came into his wife's room one morning, after he had been into his office, and said,

"I'm glad the Mooltawees are coming over here Julia, to-morrow, because you will not be alone. I have to go out into the district for a day or so, and must start at once."

"Where are you going, Li, can't I come too?"

"No, dear—unless you can ride a camel. There has been a row in a village about twenty miles from here, and I must go and see what it is all about. Several lives have been lost, and a lot of property destroyed."

It was as Kummakl told his wife. There had been an affray or a disturbance in a large village, or a cluster of villages, about twenty miles from the capital, and most conflicting were the reports of it brought in to the agency. So that Kummakl had no choice left him but to repair to the spot himself.

When he got there it was all over. The dead bodies of those slain in the fight had been burnt and buried, and it was impossible even to find out how many lives had been lost. But on inquiring into the *casus belli*, Kummakl was told by all the people who belonged to the party of the aggressors, that the reason they had risen was on account of the oppressions and exactions of the Dewan, Dowlut Rao.

Kummakl had not ridden far on his way back before he fell in with a native gentleman, a petty chief and zemindar, who had an estate in that neighbourhood, and was going out

hawking. Thinking that he might be able to give some information about the late disturbance, Kummakl joined him, and rode a little in his company. In reply to the question as to whether he knew anything about the affair, Inayet Ali, for that was the man's name, said, "Oh yes, it is noised all over the country; everybody about here knows that Mustaffa Khan, the ex-minister, induced these people to create this disturbance, and then to say they were driven to it by the Dewan's exactions, because, as every one has heard of the disagreement between the Dewan and your honour, Mustaffa Khan thought it a good opportunity to light a fire."

"So," thought Kummakl, as he rode homewards, "every one in the province, it seems, knows about the little tiff between the Dewan and myself; they know, of course, that that old meddler Col. Boozey decided against me in that case. I wonder if what Inayet Ali says is true, he is a Mahomedan too, and his interests must lie, one would think, the other way."

When Kummakl, as Virgil says, "revolving these things in his breast," reached his office, he was met by the head clerk, Mr. Cynthea Jones, who said he had a man waiting whom he had met with accidentally in the city, and discovered equally accidentally that he had some important information to give about the disturbance.

The fortuitous nature of Mr. Cynthea Jones' connection with the man with valuable information consisted in the fact that he had that morning received in hard cash a hundred gold mohurs, or sixteen hundred rupees, to introduce the "man with valuable information" to the Political Agent.

The valuable information served to complicate the matter still further, and sadly to perplex poor Kummakl's brains. The man whom Mr. Cynthea Jones introduced, was a very respectable Hindoo banker of the city, and he said he would undertake to swear that the disturbance had been got up by the Dewan, who had instructed people to say that it had been got up by Mustaffa Khan to throw discredit upon him. And the man moreover said that he had overheard the Dewan himself giving instructions.

The day of his return Kummakl did not see much of his wife alone, as the Mooltawees were still there. The next day they left early in the morning, and Julia complained of not feeling well, and did not get up. He took no great notice of her ailment, supposing it to be a temporary indisposition that would soon pass off. She got up in the afternoon, and then he could not help observing traces of illness upon her features which he had not noticed before, and which gave him some alarm. Upon mentioning to her his apprehensions, and hinting

about sending for Dr. Golee, she at once quieted his fears, saying there was nothing really the matter with her, and on no account was he to send all that distance for Dr. Golee.

"By the way, Li," she went on to say, "about this affair, you know, that you have been away about. There is a man, my ayah tells me, who is capable of giving you some very valuable information. I know it was a difficult matter to unravel, from what I have heard you say, so I told her I would tell you, but I didn't know whether you would care to hear what the man has to say."

"Oh, yes, I have no objection to hear what he has to say, tell her to send him to me to-morrow."

"Oh, no! that won't do at all. You see, Li, the man says he is afraid his life will be taken if he is seen giving the important evidence he has to give: you must see him here, or in some private place where there are no witnesses."

"It will be very difficult to find such a place, Julia. If I wanted to get a man into the Agency without its being known, I don't believe I could do it, however much I tried."

"Well, I'll tell her to bring the man here to-morrow to my room; he can come as a cloth-seller" (kaprawalas, men who are walking milliners' and linen drapers' shops in India,

which thus come to the ladies instead of the ladies going to them), "and you can see him here."

This little manœuvre, which was successfully carried out, put three hundred rupees into the ayah's pocket. Kummakl saw the man, who showed him a scrap of paper covered with writing in the Hindee character, and said it was part of some written instructions the Dewan had given to the people in the neighbourhood, who were his own tenants, to say that it was Mustaffa Khan who had originated the disturbance with the view of throwing discredit upon him, the Dewan. All this information, you must know, Kummakl duly recorded.

That evening, after dinner, he had retired to the verandah to smoke a cigar, and his bearer or valet, who had just brought him a light, said he had an "urzee" or petition to make. Kummakl asked him what it was, when he said, that he had a brother who lived at the village where the disturbance had taken place, who had had his house burnt and almost all his property destroyed, and he wanted to know to whom he ought to apply for compensation, that was all.

"This man," thought Kummakl, "will be able to give me some useful information. He appears to have been on the spot, and being a poor man and not mixed up with the intrigues

of these people, will, no doubt, tell an unbiased tale." He asked where the man was, and the bearer said he had just that instant left him to return to his home, but if the "huzoor" would see him, he had no doubt he would be able to overtake him and bring him back. Kummakl told him to go at once and fetch him, and off the bearer went, successful beyond anticipation, and hearing the two hundred rupees, he was to receive for the night's job, chink in his imagination.

Kummakl examined this man very closely as to the whole occurrence, which he related in the minutest detail, describing the position of his own house in the village, and giving the names of his neighbours, telling him how the disturbance began, and in fact the whole history from beginning to end.

It was cleverly done, for the narrator, although it was quite true that he was the "bearer's" brother, yet came from Seetapore in Oude, and had never been to Budgepore before in all his life, and had only arrived two days previously. He declared, however, that he witnessed the whole thing, and saw and heard Mustaffa Khan's emissaries first, and then Mustaffa Khan himself lay the plot, instigate the people to rise, and instruct them to say that the disturbance was got up by the Dewan with the view of implicating him, Mustaffa

Khan, by inducing his own tenants to swear that he, Mustaffa Khan, did originate it.

Next morning early, as Kummakl was going out for his morning ride alone, for Julia very often did not accompany him now, his sweeper came up and made a low salaam and begged for leave of absence for a few days, as his father, who lived in the village where the disturbance had been, had been killed during the affray, and there was no one left but a younger brother, whom he wanted to look after, as well as to bring away whatever of the property there might be left about the place. Of course he got the leave granted, and was told to bring his younger brother to Kummakl on his return. Lucky fellow, he pocketed a hundred and twenty-five rupees by that stroke of policy. Two days after, he came with his brother, a lad of about fifteen, who repeated word for word what the bearer's brother had said about Mustaffa Khan.

But my chronicle will swell to the same size as poor Kummakl's record if I put down all the stories that were told him.

Of course the matter was sent up to Government, and Kummakl was ordered to make a full investigation (which he did, taking the evidence of a hundred and twenty witnesses) and write a report. No doubt the case was a difficult one rather to unravel; still there was

not so much difficulty about it, but what Kummakl would have been able to arrive at a clear and just conclusion, had he set about it with an unprejudiced mind. But Mustaffa Khan, who in reality had originated the whole thing from the very commencement, was far too astute to introduce the *finâle* of his piece before the introductory part had been played out. He knew perfectly well that if the affray and the inquiry into it took place while Dowlut Rao was on good terms with Kummakl, it would inevitably end in the whole thing being found out and the decision going against him. He waited, therefore, till either he could hit upon a scheme for getting up a bad feeling between the two, or until something should occur which would enable him to sow distrust in the mind of the Political Agent against the Dewan. The only difficult part of the game to play was the first step: all beyond that was plain sailing.

We have seen how he succeeded in that. The visit of Dowlut Rao to Kummakl on the very day that his feelings were first aroused against him was an accident, one of those accidents that constantly occur to favour the designs of a bold man playing for a high stake. The fatal error Kummakl made was in allowing his mere private feelings to influence his conduct. But it is an error into which many men of his

position would have fallen, and one into which any man of his mental calibre would be sure to have fallen. He went into the case with a strong bias against Dowlut Rao, and reported against him. The Government, of course, had nothing to guide them but this report, and the result was that Dowlut Rao was turned out of the Dewanship and Mustaffa Khan installed in his place. This move, however, only had the effect of changing the position of the pieces on the board. Dowlut Rao naturally commenced plotting and intriguing to recover the advantage he had lost. Kummakl, between two such men as Dowlut Rao and Mustaffa Khan, may be compared to a London hack cab horse trying to overtake two thoroughbreds. By reason of race and position, Kummakl was their superior, but in intellect they were very far his superiors. It was not a very high order of intellect, you may say, seeing that subtlety and cunning formed so large an element in it. But I do not know that Kummakl's was much higher. No doubt, in a display of physical courage, they would have had no chance with the British officer, but then the three parties were not in a position where the display of physical courage or muscular development was likely to be called forth.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

KUMMAKL's anxiety about Julia's health was not allayed by her repeated assurance that there was nothing particular the matter. She so resolutely declined to have Dr. Golee sent for, that her husband, who always yielded to her wishes in everything, did so in this case also. She had given up her out-of-door exercise, her rides, her walks in the garden. Day by day she appeared to Kummakl, who watched her with the anxious eye of love, to be growing weaker and weaker. And when the autumn came, and it was refreshing after the heat of the day to sit in the verandah in the evening and watch the sun setting over the hills, she was so weak that she could not walk that distance without the support of her husband's arm. Still, to all his anxious inquiries, and to all his entreaties to let him send for medical advice, she only

returned the answer that she was merely suffering from temporary lassitude brought on by the heat of the weather.

This delusion, however, could not last for ever, and, one evening, as Kummakl seated himself beside her, after arranging her easy chair and placing her on it, so that she faced the setting sun, and the rosy tints on the western horizon seemed to be reflected from her mass of golden hair, she said, taking Lionel's hand in her own,—

"Do you know, dear Li, I think I have done wrong in persisting in not having the doctor sent for. I don't think he will do me any good, but you may send for him to-morrow. I don't feel worse, exactly, this evening, but I do feel as if there was something the matter, and I have been thinking to-day about mamma's early death, and trying to recall the little I ever heard about it."

"Wait one instant," said her husband, "I'll be back directly."

He left her to go and send an express off to Dr. Golee, and then returned and re-seated himself at her side. He did not encourage her to speak of her ailments, but feeling an inexpressible relief from her having allowed him to send for Dr. Golee, he led her thoughts and conversation away as much as possible from the present. They talked over the past; they did not

talk of the future. Minds are differently constituted, and some like dwelling on the past, and others on the future. When people are very happy in the present they do not care to dwell upon the future; they would rather think and talk of the past, and trace the steps by which they have mounted to the culminating point of their bliss. They do not care to look forward, because, as there is a condition in life when any change must be for the better, as we commonly express it, though what we mean is that the chances are very much in favour of any change being for the better, so there is a condition in life when you can hardly conceive any change but what must be for the worse. You are happy with the fulfilment of your highest hopes, and then—if fate would but let things remain, your happiness might be permanent. So Lionel and Julia talked over the past, how they had first met, and what was the impression they each derived of the other, and Julia acknowledged that it was only after they had married that Lionel had really won her love. Before that she had not known what love was. She had consented to marry him because her friends thought it a good match and every one spoke of him as a man likely to make a woman happy. They talked together calmly and peacefully, yet there was a tone of sadness in their words as there was a weight and presentiment

of coming trouble on the heart of both. As evening drew on, Julia said she did not feel equal to sitting up at dinner and would go to bed. So she went, and Kummakl repaired to his solitary dinner table. He did not expect Dr. Golee out before the following evening; but he felt as if there was no further cause for anxiety, for he fancied that all his wife wanted was some tonic medicine. In fact both of them had been foolishly speculating on their own little knowledge, you may say ignorance, of physics, and had adopted altogether erroneous conclusions as to the cause of Julia's declining health. But when Dr. Golee the following evening came out of her room after his examination of the patient, he had a very grave face indeed.

"Your wife, Kummakl," he said, "is very ill indeed, much worse than I had any idea of."

"She would not let me send for you before. I have entreated and begged her to let me send for you, but she said no, it was no consequence, it would all pass off, and so on."

"Don't reproach yourself the least about that. If I am right in what I conjecture, for I cannot make up my mind at once very certainly, I may be misled by appearances—but if I am right, it would have made no difference at all whether you sent for me before now, or later. Do you know what it was her mother died of?"

"No; I never heard, and she does not know either. She was in England at the time, and it seems her friends never talked to her much about her mother."

"Well, I will write a prescription for some simple medicine, which can be made up in your native dispensary here, and then I will be off. But I will come back in a couple of days. I do not think it is a case where medical attendance can be of much avail. All you have to do is to follow the directions on the bottle, and keep up her strength and spirits as much as possible. I shall be able to judge when I see her the second time better as to whether my first conclusions are sound or not."

The first person Dr. Golee visited when he returned to Budgepore, was Mrs. Mooltawee, and the first question he asked her, and rather abruptly as she thought, was,

"What did Mrs. Congreve die of?"

"Rapid consumption."

"Very rapid?"

"Yes. So rapid, that six months before her death, no one dreamed there was anything the matter with her. Why do you ask?"

"Because Mrs. Kummakl is very ill. I was sent for to see her for the first time the night before last, and went over yesterday. My worst fears of her case are confirmed by what

you have now said. It is a similar case to her mother's."

"Poor Lionel!" said Mrs. Mooltawee, "he is so devoted to her!"

Poor Lionel indeed! Never for one instant had the thought crossed his mind that his idol, his darling, his cherished Julia, the only being in the whole universe he cared for, the only being he worshipped, should be taken from him. He knew, of course, that death is the lot of all mankind, but he never realized in the slightest degree, never contemplated for a single moment, that the stern reaper would have the heart to cut down his beautiful flower. If you had asked him the question, whether he thought Julia was immortal, and whether his present happiness was to last for ever, he would have answered of course in the negative, with some of the common-place platitudes people keep for the subject of mortality and a future state, as old fashioned ladies bring out their best China teacups to do honour to some respected guests, whose visits are few and far between, and always occasions of considerable ceremony. But for death—hideous death, to come into his house and scatter with one blow all that made life dear to him, was something as new as it was terrible. He stood rooted to the spot where Dr. Golee had left him, for some five minutes, and never stirred a muscle. Then, with a very deep sigh,

such as would have made anyone sad to hear, he sunk into a chair and covered his face with his hands. The squall had come upon him suddenly, when he least expected it. There was no ballast, and he was shipwrecked.

He remained in that posture till summoned to assist Julia into the open air. He forgot he had not been to see her since Dr. Golee's visit. Was she, too, aware of the nature of her illness? He must be careful, and not show by any sign or expression the serious view the doctor took of the case.

"Did Dr. Golee tell you what he thought of me?" was the direct question she put her husband, scanning his countenance closely as she spoke, as if conscious there was something to conceal, and determined it should not escape her.

"Yes dearest," he said that you were worse than he expected."

"Was that all, Li? Now, don't try to conceal anything," she said, half in earnest and half in sport. "I will know what he said, and you have never disobeyed me yet, tell me."

"Well," said Kummakl, hesitatingly, "let me see, he did not certainly say what he thought about your case, because he said he had not definitely made up his mind, but he did say you were worse than he expected."

"You told me that before, you foolish old creature. Do you think I can't see that there

is something you are trying to keep back from me? Come Li, I must know. You once swore you would never refuse to do anything I told you; and I tell you to let me know what Dr. Golee said about me."

"I declare I have told you everything, Julia, that he said. He did say one thing more, certainly; he asked me if I knew what your mamma died of."

"Ah!" said Julia to herself, "that was it then."

After a long pause, during which she remained buried in thought, her large grey eyes fixed on the sky, she turned her head towards her husband, and said,

"Li, dear, you will be very, very lonely without me?"

Man as he was, he burst into tears. She alone of the two remained unmoved, to all outward appearance. Ashamed of the betrayal by his emotion of all his worst fears and the doctor's impressions, he rapidly recovered himself. She was the first to speak. There was a little of reproach in her tone.

"Are those tears for yourself, or for me, Li?"

"Forgive me, Julia, for being so weak and foolish. I cannot bear to think of your being so ill, and—"

"And what?" she said, seeing him hesitate, "and no hope, is that it, Li?"

Kummakl had determined not to let her see or know how anxious he was, and what the doctor thought of her case, but fate was too strong for him. Every word he said, he seemed to make the matter worse.

"No, not that Julia—and I not able to do a thing to relieve you."

Again there was a pause—which was broken by Julia, as if she was giving expression to some conclusion she had arrived at after a long train of thought, saying half out loud and half to herself,

"What a mistake!—what a mistake!"

"Yes," said Lionel, "I wish you had let me send for Dr. Golee before."

"It was not that I was thinking of, and don't let that prey on your mind, for it was my fault, Li, and if Dr. Golee had come ever so long before he could have done no good. It was not that I was thinking of, but what a mistake my life has been!"

Kummakl looked at her anxiously. He thought that, perhaps, she was regretting their marriage.

She went on, half speaking to herself,

"Yes, what does it all come to? What is it all worth? I was never taught to think. I never had anything put before me more serious to think about than the preparations for a pic-

nic or the trimming of a dress. I was taught to dance, to play, to paint flowers, to dress well, to make an impression in a drawing room full of well dressed idlers, and what is it all worth now? What will it be worth to me ten days hence perhaps—when I am face to face with——Oh Li," she added, turning her face towards him, "why didn't *you* tell me of these things?"

"Indeed, Julia, I wish you would not talk about these things. It makes me so wretched to hear you. You are not yourself now—you are so ill and weak, these gloomy thoughts crowd on your mind, and you cannot throw them off. Let us go on with the novel I was reading when Dr. Golee came.

"No, Li, I won't finish that novel. The page is turned down where you left off reading to me, you can finish it yourself when——Oh, Li! what would I give, what thousands of worlds if I had them, had I been taught to read fewer novels, and to think and read more about this."

"Julia, you are an angel. No angel in heaven is purer or lovelier than you."

"Hush, Li, don't talk like that now. An angel of earth I might have been, for don't you see I was taught to be one, to dress and to dance, and to make myself agreeable, but the angels in heaven must be very different sort of

beings. The fact is, I have had this journey all my life before me, I never made any preparation for it, and now I am all unprepared. Go and get a bible, Li, and read me something out of it."

Kummakl did as he was bid, but he felt some doubt as to whether there was such a thing as a bible in the house at all. At last he recollected seeing one under a heap of old papers in his office; thither he went, and there he found the book he was in quest of, very dusty.

"What part shall I read, Julia?" he said, seating himself by the side of her couch, for she had meantime been wheeled into her room, and turning over the leaves listlessly like a man who has a new book and does not know where to begin.

Julia gave him no answer, but intimated that she left that to him. I think perhaps she would have found it difficult to have referred him to any part in particular.

So Kummakl, left to his own devices, and by a vigorous effort recalling some reminiscences of his childhood connected with the book before him, turned to the early part of 'Genesis,' where he recollected he used as a child to find the story of Noah and the flood. And having found the place, he began, and read to his wife the whole of that wonderful history of the destruction of the human race, with the exception

of the few saved in the ark. And Julia though she had been told the story when she was young, and though she had heard the portions of the same narrative read occasionally as the first lesson in church when her mind was running on the latest fashion in dress or her last flirtation, or the bonnet of the lady in front of her, she now seemed to hear it for the first time.

"Ah, Li," she said, when he had finished, "I dare say people used to go to balls and picnics in those days, one round of gaiety from morning to night, till all of a sudden the flood came, and then it was too late; there was a chance for them before that, though—eh, Li, what do you think?"

Kummakl had never had such a proposition put before him, and was totally unable to deal with it.

"I don't know," he said, and they both relapsed into silence.

Thus these two young and loving hearts, like two children suddenly benighted when out at play together are scared when they are brought face to face with some real and terrible danger, went groping along, as it were, in the dark, trying to find for themselves a way out of the woe that encompassed them. Each loved the other so dearly that either would willingly have sacrificed life for that other's sake. Lionel would, if he could, have given up

his own life for the sake of accompanying his darling on that gloomy journey that lay before her. But all his love and devotion could avail nothing in the present crisis.

Of a future state, of death, of immortality. in the view religion places these things before men's minds, they had between them not so much knowledge as any one of the mass of the heathen by whom they were surrounded. They, at any rate the Hindoos and the Mahomedans, had so far realized those great truths that they had attended to the outward forms of religious worship all through their lives. As for their morality and their obedience to the divine law written in their hearts, if the heathen had broken that, Lionel and Julia might have done the same, had they ever been tested. His knowledge of Christianity actually was confined to uncertain reminiscences of the story of the fall, of the flood, just now recalled in all its fulness to his memory, of the passage of the Israelites over the Red Sea, and Pharaoh with his army being drowned, and of David killing a giant with a stone. Even his knowledge, or rather recollection, of these incidents was vague. Vaguer still and more misty was his idea of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion. That a Redeemer had died to save mankind he had often been told, but he never knew what it meant, in fact never thought about it, or tried to find out what it did mean.

Julia's ideas were still more cloudy. She had a beautifully-bound church service, with crimson velvet covers, gold rim and clasp, and a gold cross on the outside, which her god-mother gave her for a present when she left school to come to India. She had been in the habit of going to church at Budgepore once on Sunday in the morning, before she was married, when she heard Green Baize, the chaplain, gabble over the service, and then read very badly what sounded very like a part of the pre-face of some old book on divinity. As for listening, or directing her attention or thought to either the service or the discourse, she didn't know any body was expected to. She had been confirmed when she was sixteen, and then had had to learn by rote the church catechism and to read with a number of other girls all through Secker, which was done as mere drudgery; when it was over she had a ticket given her, and went along with the others all dressed in white muslin up to the altar rails, where the ceremony was performed and the bishop's hands were laid on her head. She had never taken the sacrament, and if she had been asked what it was, could have given no answer. She had been carefully educated in all the refinements of civilized life, but no one ever dreamed of teaching her to think. Her aunt, with whom she lived for a few years in her childhood, had

taught her to say her prayers every morning and evening, but when she went to school the other girls laughed at her for doing it, and she left it off, and speedily forgot even the words she used to repeat by rote. All through her life every effort had been made by those about her to strew her path with flowers, and to keep carefully away every idea that could cloud with a passing gloom the sunshine of her pleasures. She had been accustomed from her infancy to be flattered, and caressed and admired, and yet the excellence of her natural disposition was such that all this flattery and admiration had never made her vain or exacting, or even thoughtless of the happiness of others. Brought up amid all the refinements and elegances of life, no coarse ideas dimmed the natural purity of her mind. With her exquisite beauty, her loveliness and winning ways, and her gentle and amiable temper, she seemed to want but the training for heaven to make her indeed an angel. But now she was face to face with death, and she was called to go forth into the unknown region alone, and for the first time in her life she was forced to think of what her lot would be there.

After the conversation, a portion of which I have related, and which continued for some little time in the same strain, the two loving hearts so soon to be parted, groping as it were

after Truth, Kummakl rose and left her upon some household business. He had not been away half an hour when he was startled by the ayah's scream. He hurried back to her room, and there he found the ayah standing wringing her hands over the prostrate form of Julia, who was on her knees with her head upon the couch and her hands clasped over her head.

She was apparently lifeless. Lionel had never before seen her in the posture of prayer, for such it was, though she had fainted. With the ayah's assistance he raised her and laid her on her bed and took off her dress, when he was inexpressively relieved to observe signs of returning animation. He left her for a moment and hurried out to send an express for Dr. Golee, and then returned to the bedside, where he found her sufficiently recovered to recognize him. They put her into bed, and she fell asleep, clasping her husband's hand. He was afraid to move it lest he should disturb her, and he sat there hour after hour till his whole body ached from remaining so long in one posture that the pain was almost unendurable, still he did not stir till two o'clock, when Dr. Golee arrived. His entry into the room, though silently made, awoke her. He heard what had happened, ordered some fresh stimulants, gave a few directions to Kummakl, and then hurried

back, for he had to be at Budgepore in the morning to attend a committee upon a bottle of port wine supplied by the Commissariat to the hospital, which had been reported unsound.

The next day Mrs. Mooltawee came over, but Kummakl refused to give up his place at Julia's bedside. Her aunt was inexpressibly shocked at the ravages disease had already made on the form of her lovely niece. Her good feeling prevented her from intruding much upon the grief and sympathy of the young husband and wife, but her mere presence in the house was an immense relief to Lionel. During the day Julia bade him read to her again, and told him to select some part of the New Testament, and he by chance opened it at the latter part of the Gospel of St. John, which he read through to the end. It was strange how the old neglected bible, which had lain so long covered with dust under a heap of papers in the office, rose in value. It was their only mainstay in the sudden calamity which had overwhelmed them both.

But I have lingered too long over the scene. Day by day Julia got weaker. Kummakl never left her day or night except for a few minutes at a time. Once or twice the thought had crossed his mind that he would destroy himself so as to die at the same moment with his beloved idol, and accompany her to the un-

known region whither she was travelling so fast, for strange as it may seem, he believed in the immortality of the soul, and felt that there was an existence after and apart from life which he would fain have shared with her. But some instinct bade him chase the idea from his mind. It was not love of life, for life he did not care for without her; it was not fear, for he fancied he should be with her, and whatever there might be of a fearful nature to be apprehended, he would willingly have encountered for the sake of supporting her under it. But it was some instinct that warned him off the path, and he endeavoured to dismiss the notion from his thoughts, though it would rise again and again till it was too late to carry it out, for Julia was gone, and he did not feel certain that he should overtake or find her in the land whither she had fled.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAB-HORSE BETWEEN TWO THOROUGH-BREDS.

UTTERLY worn out by long watching and grief, Kummakl had hardly physical strength or consciousness left to realize the truth when they tried to force it upon him. He was alone in the world, and how inexpressibly lonely he felt! But there was work for him to do, for all the time of Julia's illness he had neglected everything, and now had to bring up arrears.

Dowlut Rao had retired to his estate upon his dismissal from the dewanship, and then set himself to work to discover some means of unravelling the plot by which his rival had supplanted him. Among his own tenants who were all more or less cognizant of the transactions which had preceded the outbreak in the village, he had famous opportunities for dis-

covering the truth. But it was one thing to discover it so as to satisfy himself, and another to make matters so clear as to satisfy the authorities who were prejudiced against him.

Mustaffa Khan, meantime, enjoyed to the full the emoluments and powers of his office, and none the less because he dwelt in fancied security. The agent he had employed in the duty of inciting the people to the affray was the brother of his favourite wife, a man named Jaffer Ally Khan. There was, indeed, one circumstance that occasionally caused him a little uneasiness, and that was the fact that Jaffer Ally, who was far too prudent a person to undertake the work entrusted to him without some written instructions from the then ex-dewan, had received and was in possession of a document signed and sealed under Mustaffa Khan's own hand conveying those instructions. The latter had no suspicion of his brother-in-law's fidelity, but in this whirligig world there was no foreseeing what might not turn up, and it might so happen that Jaffer Ally one day or other should conceive the desire of doing him, Mustaffa Khan, an injury, and in such a contingency there was no concealing the ugly truth that he had the means ready to hand. Dowlut Rao had also become aware of the existence of this document, and would have given a very large sum of money to get hold of it. Many

an offer he did make to Jaffer Ally in a round-about way, all of which offers were duly reported, of course, to Mustaffa Khan, who was forced to reward fidelity, and to secure it, too, by large presents. And Jaffer Ally made a good thing of it, for while he held possession of the papers the dewan was in reality his slave. So matters went on, and so I dare say they would have continued to go on some time longer, had not Mustaffa Khan's passions intervened. So long as Jaffer Ally's sister held her sway in the harem and her husband's affections were undisputedly her's, she had no cause to mix herself up in the intrigues; but in an evil moment for them both she got a very pretty maid into the harem to wait upon her, against whose charms Mustaffa Khan's philosophy and self-interest were alike powerless. His wife discovered one day the intrigue (indeed it had passed far beyond the preliminary stages of intrigue) between her husband and the slave girl, and a domestic fracas ensued. High words passed, mutual reproaches that between husband and wife can never be forgotten, and seldom are forgiven. Mustaffa Khan made a deadly enemy of the woman who through her influence with her brother had his fate in her hands. She communicated what had occurred to Jaffer Ally who bade her to beware of poison, and came and resided himself near the dewan's

residence on purpose to watch over his sister's welfare.

The warning which sprang from a thorough acquaintance with Mustaffa Khan's unscrupulous character was not misplaced. One night, Jaffer Ally received from the hand of a trusty messenger a packet containing some sweatmeats which his sister sent him, with a message, saying she had reason to believe they were poisoned, for her husband had, after a hasty and suspicious reconciliation, sent them to her as a peace offering. Jaffer Ally experimented with them upon a dog, and the rapid death of the animal, in horrible convulsions, left no doubt on his mind of his sister's danger and her husband's intentions. Next day he called on Mustaffa Khan and demanded, as the price of safety, an immense sum of money, or a large grant of land in lieu of it, and an instant divorce or separation from his sister, whose life was no longer safe under his roof. Mustaffa Khan refused, denied the charge, and desired him to do his worst. Jaffer Ally then left. It was about six o'clock in the evening, and after enclosing the document in a cover sealed with his own seal addressed to Kummakl, and left it at the Agency, mounted his horse, and rode straight off towards Dowlut Rao's estate. He never lived to reach it. Just as evening drew on, as he was crossing a lonely moor, he was

fired at from behind a bush. The shot missed. He reined in his horse and faced about, drawing his pistol at the same time. At that moment two men rushed upon him, one seized his horse's bridle, and the other thrust a spear through his body, but not before he had fired with an unerring aim. He fell with his assailant, the latter dying instantly, for he was shot through the heart; the other lingering in agony, in which condition the man who had seized his horse, after letting the animal go, came and searched all over his person carefully, as if looking for some article concealed about him. Next morning it was reported to Kummakl that Dowlut Rao had assassinated a servant of Mustaffa Khan's, and his brother-in-law Jaffer Ally.

This tragedy took place about three months after Julia's death, during which Kummakl had been dragging out a wretched existence, finding life almost insupportable, and longing to get away from a scene so full of sad reminiscences, and the gloomy shadow of happiness that had flown for ever. That evening he was sitting alone in his room, meditating over his past life and longing for the means of retiring from the service and the country, when Mustaffa Khan was announced. Kummakl had, of course, received the packet left by Jaffer Ally, and through his private moonshee (for he could not read the

language himself) had mastered its contents. His genius, however, never very acute, and blunted, perhaps, by the domestic sorrow he had recently undergone, failed to trace any connection between the tragedy of the preceding evening and the document itself. Mustaffa Khan knew, of course, by this time where the paper was. Had he known it in time to stay the execution of his plans, Jaffer Ally might have been alive, for it was no part of his business to incur useless risks, and the murder of his brother-in-law had turned out to be a most useless one. No sooner had Kummakl's private and confidential moonshee left the room after reading the paper to his master, than he sent a short note over to the dewan, telling him he had something of importance to communicate. The dewan came over to the Agency and in the moonshee's private room saw the paper which had been to him the cause of so much uneasiness. The moonshee, of course, was ready to assist with any advice or device he could suggest, but the ordinary resources in such cases were of no avail here. If the alteration of a date or a name, or the insertion of a few words here and there, such as can easily be managed with most vernacular documents so as entirely to alter their whole purport and meaning, could have been effected in this case, all difficulties might have been removed at once.

But the nature of the contents of the document were such that no tampering with the words or sentences or dates could have the slightest effect upon its general tenor. Some of my readers may like to see a translation of it. The document was as follows :—

"To the honoured brother of the harem of his faithful servant Jaffer Ally Khan greeting (salam).

"Be it known that for certain reasons, it is necessary that the fire of discord should be lighted in the mouzas (villages) of Mobaruckpore, &c. (here follow the names of several villages which need not be transcribed). This is to show that I have authorized Jaffer Ally Khan to act for me in this matter, and will confirm all that he deems necessary to do in the prosecution of this design.

"At the Sheesmehal of Budgepore, 15th Rubbee-ool-awwul, A. H. 1278."

"What a cursed thing it is," said Mustaffa Khan, after conning it over two or three times, twisting it about between his finger and thumb as he spoke. "There is no doing any thing with it at all! We might as well try to alter the texts of the holy book itself!"

"Yes," said the moonshee, "your Highness should have sent for me to draw it up and not attempted it yourself. It was the work of a scribe, not a minister, to write out a paper of

this kind—scribes know how to do it properly. My father, who was a wise man,"—

"Yes, I know, he was—I wish he was here now to tell me what I had better do—well, but what of him?"

"He used to say to me—he was, your Highness knows, one of the record keepers of the Civil Court at—he used to say to me, and he taught me how to do it, never to write a document in such a way that it could not easily be corrected."

"Corrected, yes that is right, documents should always be capable of being corrected—I wish I could correct this," said Mustaffa Khan, with a dry satirical humour, foreign to the Asiatic character. "Cannot we correct this—we have the words 'fasad-i-atish' (fire of discord)—if that phrase was altered,—but let me see, what shall it be?"

But the dewan was puzzled—he looked and looked again at the paper, and shook his head and muttered, as if saying words over to himself, "alif dal," and so on, mentioning the letters by their alphabetical names.

The moonshee watched him with an amused expression of countenance. Perhaps he enjoyed the other's dilemma—as he relished an intrigue—or he foresaw golden opportunities before him. At any rate, it was not to his profit to help the dewan out of his difficulties at this stage.

"It's no use," he said at last. "Even if we could think of anything to alter this 'fasad-i-atish' into, it would be of no use, the sahib particularly noticed the expression, made me repeat it three times over, and then repeated it to himself. He has written it in his memory."

With an oath, which I do not care to repeat, invoking some very unpleasant consequences upon Kummakl's head, whom he designated as that accursed Kaffir, Mustaffa Khan tossed the paper on the table, and got up to leave the room.

He went straight from the moonshee's apartment to Kummakl's. By the time he had reached the latter, his feelings bore no trace of the anger or vexation they had worn a minute previously.

The dewan's object in visiting Kummakl, was mainly to discover if he could learn what that officer thought about the revelation recently made. He calculated that he would probably lead the conversation to it himself, nor was he mistaken, for after a few remarks had passed between them on the usual topics of mere formality, Kummakl said,

"I am very sorry to see, dewan sahib, that it was you, after all, who stirred up the ill-feeling at Mobaruckpore."

Mustaffa Khan laughed a pleasant little laugh.

"The sahib has seen it, then! Is it not cleverly done? Even my seal and signature so well imitated, that it would be difficult to discover the forgery."

"Forged you say it is!" said Kummakl, looking him steadily in the face. "It had every appearance of being genuine."

"Nevertheless, I shall show your honour that it is a clever forgery."

"Well," said Kummakl, "I shall do nothing further in the business till I have reported the matter, and then, if I am ordered to investigate the case, I will call on you to substantiate what you have said. If you can do so, I shall be very glad."

Before Mustaffa Khan went home, he had an interview with the moonshee for two minutes in his private room, and exacted a promise that he would call at his house that night and bring the paper with him.

When the moonshee got there, Mustaffa Khan was waiting for him, and, as soon as the attendant had withdrawn, he produced another document, the counterpart of the genuine one in the moonshee's possession, and desired the latter to compare the two. He did so very carefully, but confessed himself unable to detect the slightest difference. Mustaffa Khan watched him with an amused expression of

countenance, and, when he had completed his examination of the papers, he said,

"Now, let us exchange papers, you see there can be no harm in your taking this one and letting me have the other, for they are so exactly alike, that you can detect no difference whatever between them." At the same time, he put into his hand an order on a native banking firm in the town for five thousand rupees. The argument was conclusive. The exchange was made, and the moonshee next morning placed the document received the night before from Mustaffa Khan, with the other papers in the case, wondering much what the astute minister could possibly mean by giving him a really genuine document, signed by himself, and sealed with his own seal, in lieu of one which was indeed the exact counterpart of the other, but had come from the custody of one who might have been his enemy.

Kummakl of course reported the affair, and solicited orders how to act; meantime, events occurred which served still further to complicate matters

One or two evenings after his interview with Kummakl, Mustaffa Khan, on returning from the Nawab's palace, where he had been detained nearly the whole day on business, was distressed by the announcement that the girl to whom he was so much attached, and his passion for whom

had been at the bottom of his recent misfortune, was dangerously ill. It was so indeed. He found her stretched on the floor in convulsive agonies most painful to witness. A physician had been sent for as soon as the symptoms appeared, by some of the household, and was in attendance when Mustaffa Khan reached home, but his services were of no avail. The shrieks of the poor girl and her sufferings were terrible to watch, but as with many oriental houses belonging to the better classes, the building was so constructed, that the sounds could not penetrate to the outer air, and it is perhaps just as well they cannot.

The day passed uncomfortably enough for the dewan, who was distracted between his love for the girl, and distress at witnessing her sufferings, which terminated towards evening in death, and his anger at the perpetrator of the deed, for no one in the household doubted that the girl had been poisoned by Jaffer Ally Khan's sister Zeenut Mahal, in revenge for her brother's death. He vowed himself revenge too, but would take it by-and-by at his own time.

In the evening, Kummakl was waited on by Dowlut Rao, who had come in haste on a summons, secretly conveyed to him from Zeenut Mahal, imploring him to save her and avenge her brother's death. He lost no time in obey-

ing the summons, but found difficulty in acting now he had arrived. He could not gain access to Mustaffa Khan's harem of course without violence, and he knew it would be useless to attempt to influence the Nawab; so, after turning the matter over in his mind, he went to Kummakl, and told him the whole story. Jaffer Ally had been waylaid and murdered by Mustaffa Khan's own men, and in order to secure possession of the document, which was now in the Sahib's possession (Kummakl wondered how Dowlut Rao came to know this.) His sister was an inmate of Mustaffa Khan's household, and in danger of her life. Would not the sahib be convinced at last that he, Dowlut Rao, had been a victim of a conspiracy, and unjustly ejected from the dewanship.

Kummakl replied, of course, that he, Dowlut Rao, was suspected of having instigated the murder, the more so because the possession of the document would be of more use to him than to any one else. In vain the ex-dewan protested his innocence, and urged all the arguments he could in support of it. Kummakl shook his head, and said that of course he could give no decision in the case, but should await the orders of Government. So Dowlut Rao left and returned to the house where he was accustomed to put up when he

visited the city, whence he despatched a messenger to communicate privately with Zeenut Mehal, whose co-operation he saw would now be absolutely necessary.

It would lengthen out my story into an "Arabian Night" were I to relate in detail all the plotting and counterplotting that went on between the foes and their retainers. It will be sufficient to say that eventually Zeenut Mahal managed to escape from her husband's house, and to the intense horror and scandal of all pious Mussulmans and virtuous Hindoos in the city of Budgepore, took refuge under the protection of no less a person than Dowlut Rao himself. There was, of course, great excitement in the city, though no violence was attempted. Zeenut Mahal was a valuable witness on Dowlut Rao's side, for she was cognizant with the part her brother had taken in the affair, and with all that had transpired since. But Mustaffa Khan upset all the inferences deducible from her testimony, and declared that the word of such a perfidious woman who could abandon her husband's house and seek the protection of a stranger and an unbeliever, was not worthy of any credit. Poor Kummakl was fairly bewildered, and when at last an order came to him to send up a report of the whole occurrence, he found his literary powers scarce able to bear the strain put upon them.

According to promise he sent for Mustaffa Khan, and told him that he was about to report on the affair, and that if he had anything to urge in substantiation of his averment that the document which afforded so important a link in the chain was a forgery, he was ready to hear it. Mustaffa Khan, who had come prepared for the inquiry, began by drawing Kummakl's attention to the paper.

"You see, sahib," he said, "it has every appearance of being genuine."

"It has, indeed."

"Very well, and now the signature is easily imitated."

"But the seal—is not that your seal?"

It must here be explained that the kind of seal referred to in use among orientals in Mustaffa Khan's position, is not an impression upon wax as the word would ordinarily denote, but a device stamped on the foot of a document by the seal impressed in ink.

"Has the sahib a magnifying glass?"

Kummakl unscrewed the magnifying lens from a pair of binoculars and handed it to the dewan.

"Now," said he, "there are in this office hundreds of official documents bearing my seal, will the sahib send for a bundle of them?"

A pile of about a hundred and fifty vernacular documents, all impressed with the dewan's

seal, were brought by the moonshee, who made the errand a pretext for remaining in the room, as he was really anxious to learn what line of argument the dewan was about to adopt. He took the official documents one by one, laid each one separately on the table before Kummakl, and placed his seal over the mark impressed on them, showing that the edge of the seal exactly fitted the circumference of the impression. It took some time, but he went patiently through them all, and there was not one where there was the difference of a hair's breadth between the impression and the seal.

"Now," he said, "we will try the same test with this," and placing the document which he averred to be a forgery upon the table and smoothing it out with his hand, he applied the seal to the impression, and showed that there was about an eighth of an inch between the outer circumference of the impression and the edge of the seal itself. It was apparent when carefully compared, but any one might have looked at it a thousand times without the actual test and not observed the least difference.

The dewan then put the lens in Kummakl's hand and desired him to examine carefully the lines of the letters on the impressed stamp with those of the seal itself and of the mark on the other documents. Kummakl did so, and found

that although to the naked eye there was not the slightest difference observable, yet when examined with the magnifying glass the letters did not at all correspond. Kummakl was then desired to examine equally closely the signature, and that, too, on inspection under the glass, exhibited many slight differences which would readily escape the naked eye of even an accurate reader.

There is no need to lengthen out my tale. The document was pronounced a clever forgery, and Mustaffa Khan was acquitted of all complicity in the transaction imputed to him. The Nawab confiscated Dowlut Rao's jagheres (estates) and he left the territory and took service as a native officer in the — regiment of Irregular Cavalry. But the moonshee was in possession of too dangerous a secret for the dewan to allow him to remain at Budgepore, and an accusation was very easily brought against him which procured his dismissal. Mustaffa Khan then sued him in the Nawab's civil court for the five thousand rupees, which he said was a loan, and of course got a decree, which he executed ruthlessly against the moonshee, who had accumulated a good deal of property. It was, however, all seized in execution of the decree and for the expenses of the suit, and he left Budgepore a beggar. He afterwards met Dowlut Rao, and told him the story

of the exchanged documents, which Dowlut Rao told his commanding officer, and so the story came round to me. The commanding officer interested himself much in the case, and referred it to government, who, however, "declined to interfere," and administered a severe reproof to the officer for exceeding the limit of his official duties in meddling with the case at all.

THE END

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